THÉOPHILE
GAUTIER

BORN - 1811
DIED - 1872

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Tahoser listened with inattention more apparent than real to the song of the musician. — Page 80.

The Gascon Edition

THE COMPLETE WORKS *of*
THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Volume III

The Romance of a Mummy
Portraits of the Day

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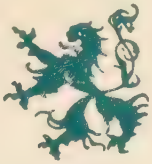

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The Romance of a Mummy

The Romance of a Mummy

Introduction

THE subject of "The Romance of a Mummy" was possibly suggested to Théophile Gautier by Ernest Feydeau, the author of "Fanny" and other works of purely light literature, who published in 1858 a "General History of Funeral Customs and Burials among the Ancients." This book was reviewed by Gautier when it appeared, and it is most likely that he had been previously made acquainted with its contents and had discussed Egyptian funeral rites and modes of sepulture with the author, for it was to Feydeau that he dedicated his novel when it was published in book form by Hachette in 1858. An omnivorous reader, Gautier had no doubt also perused the far more important works of Champollion, the decipherer of the inscriptions on the Rosetta stone, who first gave the learned world the key to the mysterious Egyptian hieroglyphic alphabet.

Champollion's "Monuments of Egypt and Nubia" had appeared in four volumes from 1835 to 1845, and a continuation by himself and the Vicomte Emmanuel de Rougé was completed in 1872. Champollion-Figeac's "Ancient Egypt" had been published in 1840, having been preceded by Lenormant's "The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in the Louvre," in 1830, and followed by Prisse d'Avennes' "Monuments of Egypt" in 1847. The explorations and discoveries of Mariette, summed up in that writer's "Selected Monuments and Drawings," issued in 1856, and the steady growth of the Egyptian Museum in the Louvre, to which was added in 1852 the magnificent Clot-Bey collection, must have attracted the attention of Gautier, always keenly interested in art, literature, and erudition.

The account he gives, in his novel, of the ancient city of Thebes, of the great necropolis in the valley of Biban el Molûk, of the subterranean tombs, of the precautions taken by the designers to baffle curiosity, of the form and ornamentation of the sarcophagi, of the mummy-cases, of the mummy itself, of the manners, customs, dress, and beliefs of the ancient Egyptians, are marvellously accurate. Nothing is easier than to

verify his descriptions by reference to the works of Champollion, Mariette, Wilkinson, Rawlinson, Erman, Edwards, and Maspero. Scarcely here and there will the reader find a possible error in his statements. It is evident that he has not trusted alone to what Feydeau told him, or to what he read in his book or in the works of Egyptologists; he examined the antiquities in the Louvre for himself; he noted carefully the scenes depicted on monuments and sarcophagi; he traced the ornamentation in all its details; he studied the poses, the attitudes, the expressions; he marked the costumes, the accessories; in a word, he mastered his subject, and then only did he, with that facility and certainty that amazed Balzac, write in swift succession the chapters of the novel which appeared in the numbers of the "Moniteur Universel" from March 11 to May 6, 1857.

His remark on Feydeau's book, "Picturesqueness in no wise detracts from accuracy," might well be applied to his own "Romance," which fascinates the reader with its evocation of a long vanished past and its representation of a civilisation buried for centuries in mystery. The weaving in of the wonders wrought by Moses and Aaron, of the overwhelming of the Pharaoh,

whether Thotmes or Rameses, is skilfully managed, and imparts to the portions of the Biblical narrative used by him a verisimilitude and a sensation of actuality highly artistic. The purely erudite part of the work would probably not have interested the general public, indifferent to the discoveries of archæology, but the introduction of the human element of love at once captivated it; the erudite appreciated the accuracy of the restoration of ancient times and manners; the merely curious were pleased with a well told story, cleverly set in a framework whose strangeness appealed to their love of exoticism and novelty.

There have been added by the editor, as bearing upon the subject of the "Romance of a Mummy," two or three chapters from the volume entitled "The Orient," which is made up of a collection of sketches and letters of travel written at different times, and of reviews of books upon Eastern subjects, whether modern or ancient. The chapter describing a trip to Egypt was the result of a flying visit paid to that country on the occasion of the official opening of the Suez Canal in November, 1869. Gautier embarked on board the steamship "Moeris," of the Messageries Impériales, at Marseilles. The very first night out he

slipped and fell down the companion steps, and broke his left arm above the elbow. This painful accident did not prevent his fulfilling his promise to keep the "Journal Officiel," with which he was then connected, fully supplied with accounts of the land and the inauguration ceremonies.

The Romance of a Mummy

Prologue

"I HAVE a presentiment that we shall find in the valley of Biban el Molûk a tomb intact," said to a high-bred-looking young Englishman a much more humble personage who was wiping, with a big, blue-checked handkerchief, his bald head, on which stood drops of perspiration, just as if it had been made of porous clay and filled with water like a Theban water-jar.

"May Osiris hear you!" replied the English nobleman to the German scholar. "One may be allowed such an invocation in the presence of the ancient *Diospolis Magna*. But we have been so often deceived hitherto; treasure-seekers have always forestalled us."

"A tomb which neither the Shepherd Kings nor the Medes of Cambyses nor the Greeks nor the Romans nor the Arabs have explored, and which will give up to us its riches intact," continued the perspiring scholar, with an enthusiasm which made his eyes gleam behind the lenses of his blue glasses.

"And on which you will print a most learned dissertation which will give you a place by the side of Champollion, Rosellini, Wilkinson, Lepsius, and Belzoni," said the young nobleman.

"I shall dedicate it to you, my lord, for had you not treated me with regal munificence, I could not have backed up my system by an examination of the monuments, and I should have died in my little town in Germany without having beheld the marvels of this ancient land," replied the scholar, with emotion.

This conversation took place not far from the Nile, at the entrance to the valley of Biban el Molûk, between Lord Evandale, who rode an Arab horse, and Dr. Rumphius, more modestly perched upon an ass, the lean hind-quarters of which a fellah was belabouring. The boat which had brought the two travellers, and which was to be their dwelling during their stay, was moored on the other side of the Nile in front of the village of Luxor. Its sweeps were shipped, its great lateen sails furled on the yards. After having devoted a few days to visiting and studying the amazing ruins of Thebes, gigantic remains of a mighty world, they had crossed the river on a sandal, a light

native boat, and were proceeding towards the barren region which contains within its depths, far down mysterious hypogea, the former inhabitants of the palaces on the other bank. A few men of the crew accompanied Lord Evandale and Dr. Rumphius at a distance, while the others, stretched out on the deck in the shadow of the cabin, were peacefully smoking their pipes and watching the craft.

Lord Evandale was one of those thoroughly irreproachable young noblemen whom the upper classes of Britain give to civilisation. He bore everywhere with him the disdainful sense of security which comes from great hereditary wealth, a historic name inscribed in the "Peerage and Baronetage" — a book second only to the Bible in England — and a beauty against which nothing could be urged, save that it was too great for a man. His clear-cut and cold features seemed to be a wax copy of the head of Meleager or Antinoüs; his brilliant complexion seemed to be the result of rouge and powder, and his somewhat reddish hair curled naturally as accurately as an expert hairdresser or clever valet could have made it curl. On the other hand, the firm glance of his steel-blue eyes and the slightly sneering expression

of his lower lip corrected whatever there might be of effeminate in his general appearance.

As a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, the young nobleman indulged occasionally in a cruise on his swift yacht *Puck*, built of teak, fitted like a boudoir, and manned by a small crew of picked seamen. In the course of the preceding year he had visited Iceland; in the present year he was visiting Egypt, and his yacht awaited him in the roads of Alexandria. He had with him a scholar, a physician, a naturalist, an artist, and a photographer, in order that his trip might not be unfruitful. He was himself highly educated, and his society successes had not made him forget his triumphs at Cambridge University. He was dressed with that accuracy and careful neatness characteristic of the English, who traverse the desert sands in the same costume which they would wear when walking on the pier at Ramsgate or on the pavements of the West End. A coat, vest, and trousers of white duck, intended to repel the sun's rays, composed his costume, which was completed by a narrow blue necktie with white spots, and an extremely fine Panama hat with a veil.

Rumphius, the Egyptologist, preserved even in this

hot climate the traditional black coat of the scholar with its loose skirts, its curled up collar, its worn buttons, some of which had freed themselves of their silk covering. His black trousers shone in places and showed the warp. Near the right knee an attentive observer might have remarked upon the greyish ground of the stuff a systematic series of lines of richer tone which proved that he was in the habit of wiping his pen upon this portion of his clothes. His muslin cravat, rolled in the shape of a cord, hung loosely around his neck, on which stood out strongly the Adam's apple. Though he was dressed with scientific carelessness, Rumphius was not any the handsomer on that account. A few reddish hairs, streaked with gray, were brushed back behind his protruding ears, and were puffed up by the high collar of his coat. His perfectly bald skull, shining like a bone, overhung a prodigiously long nose, spongy and bulbous at the end, so that with the blue discs of his glasses he looked somewhat like an ibis, — a resemblance increased by his head sunk between his shoulders. This appearance was of course entirely suitable and most providential for one engaged in deciphering hieroglyphic inscriptions and scrolls. He looked like

a bird-headed god, such as are seen on funeral frescoes, who had transmigrated into the body of a scholar.

The lord and the doctor were travelling towards the cliffs which encircle the sombre valley of Biban el Molûk, the royal necropolis of ancient Thebes, indulging in the conversation of which we have related a part, when, rising like a Troglodyte from the black mouth of an empty sepulchre — the ordinary habitation of the fellahs — another person, dressed in somewhat theatrical fashion, abruptly entered on the scene, stood before the travellers, and saluted them with the graceful salute of the Orientals, which is at once humble, caressing, and noble.

This man was a Greek who undertook to direct excavations, who manufactured and sold antiquities, selling new ones when the supply of the old happened to fail. Nothing about him, however, smacked of the vulgar exploiter of strangers. He wore a red felt fez from which hung a long blue silk tassel; under the narrow edge of an inner linen cap showed his temples, evidently recently shaved. His olive complexion, his black eyebrows, his hooked nose, his eyes like those of a bird of prey, his big moustaches, his chin almost divided into two parts by a mark which looked very

much like a sabre-cut, would have made his face that of a brigand, had not the harshness of his features been tempered by the assumed amenity and the servile smile of a speculator who has many dealings with the public. He was dressed in very cleanly fashion in a cinnamon-coloured jacket embroidered with silk of the same colour, gaiters of the same stuff, a white vest adorned with buttons like chamomile flowers, a broad red belt, and vast bulging trousers with innumerable folds.

He had long since noted the boat at anchor before Luxor. Its size, the number of the oarsmen, the luxury of the fittings, and especially the English flag which floated from the stern, had led his mercantile instinct to expect a rich traveller whose scientific curiosity might be exploited, and who would not be satisfied with statuettes of blue or green enamelled ware, engraved scarabæi, paper rubbings of hieroglyphic panels, and other such trifles of Egyptian art.

He had followed the coming and going of the travellers among the ruins, and knowing that they would not fail, after having sated their curiosity, to cross the stream in order to visit the royal tombs, he awaited them on his own ground, certain of fleecing them to some extent. He looked upon the whole of this

funereal realm as his own property, and treated with scant courtesy the little subaltern jackals who ventured to scratch in the tombs.

With the swift perception characteristic of the Greeks, no sooner had he cast his eyes upon Lord Evandale than he quickly estimated the probable income of his lordship and resolved not to deceive him, reasoning that he would profit more by telling the truth than by lying. So he gave up his intention of leading the noble Englishman through hypogea traversed hundreds of times already, and disdained to allow him to begin excavations in places where he knew nothing would be found; for he himself had long since taken out and sold very dear the curiosities they had contained.

Argyropoulos (such was the Greek's name), while exploring the portion of the valley which had been less frequently sounded than others because hitherto the search had never been rewarded by any find, had come to the conclusion that in a certain spot, behind some rocks whose position seemed to be due to chance, there certainly existed the entrance to a passageway masked with peculiar care, which his great experience in this kind of search had enabled him to recognise by a thousand signs imperceptible to less clear-sighted

eyes than his own, which were as sharp and piercing as those of the vultures perched upon the entablature of the temples. Since he had made that discovery, two years before, he had bound himself never to walk or look in that direction lest he might give a hint to the violators of tombs.

"Does your lordship intend to attempt excavations?" said he in a sort of cosmopolitan dialect which those who have been in the ports of the Levant and have had recourse to the services of the polyglot dragomans — who end by not knowing any language — are well acquainted with. Fortunately, both Lord Evandale and his learned companion knew the various tongues from which Argyropoulos borrowed. "I can place at your disposal," he went on, "some hundred energetic fellahs who, under the spur of whip and bakshîsh, would dig with their finger-nails to the very centre of the earth. We may try, if it pleases your lordship, to clear away a buried sphinx or a shrine, or to open up a hypogeum."

On seeing that his lordship remained unmoved by this tempting enumeration, and that a sceptical smile flitted across the doctor's face, Argyropoulos understood that he had not to deal with easy dupes, and he was

confirmed in his intention to sell to the Englishman the discovery on which he reckoned to complete his fortune and to give a dowry to his daughter.

"I can see that you are scholars, not ordinary tourists, and that vulgar curiosity does not bring you here," he went on, speaking in English less mixed with Greek, Arabic, and Italian. "I will show you a tomb which has hitherto escaped all searchers, which no one knows of but myself. It is a treasure which I have carefully preserved for a person worthy of it."

"And for which you will have to be paid a high price," said his lordship, smiling.

"I am too honest to contradict your lordship; I do hope to get a good price for my discovery. Every one in this world lives by his trade. Mine is to exhume Pharaohs and sell them to strangers. Pharaohs are becoming scarce at the rate at which they are being dug up; there are not enough left for everybody. They are very much in demand, and it is long since any have been manufactured."

"Quite right," said the scholar; "it is some centuries since the undertakers, dissectors, and embalmers have shut up shop, and the Memnonia, peaceful dwellings of the dead, have been deserted by the living."

The Greek, as he heard these words, cast a side-long glance at the German, but fancying from his wretched dress that he had no voice in the matter, he continued to address himself exclusively to the young nobleman.

"Are a thousand guineas too much, my lord, for a tomb of the greatest antiquity, which no human hand has opened for more than three thousand years, since the priests rolled rocks before its mouth? Indeed, it is giving it away; for perhaps it contains quantities of gold, diamond, and pearl necklaces, carbuncle earrings, sapphire seals, ancient idols in precious metals, and coins which could be turned to account."

"You sly rascal!" said Rumphius, "you are praising up your wares, but you know better than any one that nothing of the sort is found in Egyptian tombs."

Argyropoulos, understanding that he had to do with clever men, ceased to boast, and turning to Lord Evandale, he said to him, "Well, my lord, does the price suit you?"

"I will give a thousand guineas," replied the young nobleman, "if the tomb has not been opened; but I shall give nothing if a single stone has been touched by the crow-bar of the diggers."

"With the additional proviso," added Rumphius the prudent, "that we carry off everything we shall find in the tomb."

"Agreed!" said Argyropoulos, with a look of complete confidence. "Your lordship may get ready your bank-notes and gold beforehand."

"Dr. Rumphius," said Lord Evandale to his acolyte, "it strikes me that the wish you uttered just now is about to be realised. This man seems sure of what he says."

"Heaven will it may be so!" replied the scholar, shaking his head somewhat doubtfully; "but the Greeks are most barefaced liars. *Cretæ mendaces*, says the proverb."

"No doubt this one comes from the mainland," answered Lord Evandale, "and I think that for once he has told the truth."

The Greek walked a few steps ahead of the nobleman and the scholar like a well-bred man who knows what is proper. He walked lightly and firmly, like a man who feels that he is on his own ground.

The narrow defile which forms the entrance to the valley of Biban el Molûk was soon reached. It had more the appearance of the work of man than

of a natural opening in the mighty wall of the mountain, as if the Genius of Solitude had desired to make this realm of death inaccessible. On the perpendicular rocky walls were faintly discernible shapeless vestiges of weather-worn sculptures which might have been mistaken for the asperities of the stone imitating the worn figures of a half-effaced *basso-relievo*. Beyond the opening, the valley, which here widened somewhat, presented the most desolate sight. On either side rose steep slopes formed of huge masses of calcareous rock, rough, leprous-looking, worn, cracked, ground to sand, in a complete state of decomposition under the pitiless sun. They resembled bones calcined in the fire, and yawned with the weariness of eternity out of their deep crevices, imploring by their thousand cracks the drop of water which never fell. The walls rose almost vertically to a great height, and their dentelated crests stood out grayish-white against the almost black indigo of the sky, like the broken battlements of a giant ruined fortress. The rays of the sun heated to white heat one of the sides of the funeral valley, the other being bathed in that crude blue tint of torrid lands which strikes the people of the North as untruthful

when it is reproduced by painters, and which stands out as sharply as the shadows on an architectural drawing.

The valley sometimes made sudden turns, sometimes narrowed into defiles as the boulders and cliffs drew closer or apart. The thoroughly dry atmosphere in these climates being perfectly transparent, there was no aerial perspective in this place of desolation. Every detail, sharp, accurate, bare, stood out, even in the background, with pitiless dryness, and the distance could only be guessed at by the smaller dimensions of objects. It seemed as though cruel nature had resolved not to conceal any wretchedness, any sadness of this bare land, deader even than the dead it contained. Upon the sun-lighted cliff streamed like a cascade of fire a blinding glare like that which is given out by molten metal; every rock face, transformed into a burning-glass, returned it more ardent still. These reflections, crossing and recrossing each other, joined to the flaming rays which fell from heaven and which were reflected by the ground, produced a heat equal to that of an oven, and the poor German doctor had hard work to wipe his face with his blue-checked handkerchief, which was as wet as if it had been dipped in water.

PROLOGUE

There was not a particle of loam to be found in the whole valley, consequently not a blade of grass, not a bramble, not a creeper, not even a patch of moss to break the uniformly whitish tone of the torrified landscape. The cracks and recesses of the rocks did not hold coolness enough for the thin, hairy roots of the smallest rock plant. The place looked as if it held the ashes of a chain of mountains, consumed in some great planetary conflagration, and the accuracy of the parallel was completed by great black strips looking like cauterised cicatrices which rayed the chalky slopes.

Deep silence reigned over this waste; no sign of life was visible; no flutter of wing, no hum of insect, no flash of lizard or reptile; even the shrill song of the cricket, that lover of burning solitudes, was unheard. The soil was formed of a micaceous, brilliant dust like ground sandstone, and here and there rose hummocks formed of the fragments of stone torn from the depths of the chain, which had been excavated by the persevering workmen of vanished generations, and the chisel of the Troglodyte labourers who had prepared in the shadow the eternal dwelling-places of the dead. The broken entrails of the moun-

tain had produced other mountains, friable heaps of small rocks which might have been mistaken for the natural range.

On the sides of the cliffs showed here and there small openings surrounded with blocks of stone thrown in disorder: square holes flanked by pillars covered with hieroglyphs, the lintels of which bore mysterious cartouches on which could yet be made out in a great yellow disc the sacred scarabæus, the ram-headed sun, and the goddesses Isis and Nephthys standing or kneeling.

These were the tombs of the ancient kings of Thebes. Argyropoulos did not stop there, but led the travellers up a sort of steep slope, which at first glance seemed nothing but a break on the side of the mountain, choked in many places by fallen masses of rock, until they reached a narrow platform, a sort of cornice projecting over the vertical cliff on which the rocks, apparently thrown together by chance, nevertheless exhibited on close examination some symmetrical arrangement.

When the nobleman, who was a practised athlete, and the doctor, who was much less agile, had succeeded in climbing up to him, Argyropoulos pointed

with his stick to a huge stone and said with triumphant satisfaction, "There is the spot!"

He clapped his hands in Oriental fashion, and straightway from the fissures of the rocks, from the folds of the valley, hastened up pale, ragged fellahs, who bore in their bronze-coloured arms crow-bars, pick-axes, hammers, ladders, and all necessary tools. They escaladed the steep slope like a legion of black ants; those who could not find room on the narrow ledge on which already stood the Greek, Lord Evandale, and Dr. Rumphius, hung by their hands and steadied themselves with their feet against the projections in the rock. The Greek signed to three of the most robust, who placed their crow-bars under the edges of the boulder. Their muscles stood out upon their thin arms, and they pressed with their whole weight on the end of the levers. At last the boulder moved, tottered for a moment like a drunken man, and, urged by the united efforts of Argyropoulos, Lord Evandale, Rumphius, and a few Arabs who had succeeded in climbing the ledge, bounded down the slope. Two other boulders of less size went the same way, one after another, and then it was plain that the belief of the Greek was justified. The

entrance to a tomb, which had evidently escaped the investigations of the treasure-seekers, appeared in all its integrity.

It was a sort of portico squarely cut in the living rock. On the two side-walls a couple of pairs of pillars exhibited capitals formed of bulls' heads, the horns of which were twisted like the crescent of Isis. Below the low door, with its jambs flanked by long panels covered with hieroglyphs, there was a broad, emblematic square. In the centre of a yellow disc showed by the side of the scarabæus, symbol of successive new births, the ram-headed god, the symbol of the setting sun. Outside the disc, Isis and Nephthys, incarnations of the Beginning and the End, were kneeling, one leg bent under the thigh, the other raised to the height of the elbow, in the Egyptian attitude, the arms stretched forward with an air of mysterious amazement, and the body clothed in a close fitting gown girdled by a belt with falling ends. Behind a wall of stone and unbaked brick, that readily yielded to the pickaxes of the workmen, was discovered the stone slab which formed the doorway of the subterranean monument. On the clay seal which closed it, the German doctor, thoroughly familiar with hiero-

glyphs, had no difficulty in reading the motto of the guardian of the funeral dwellings, who had closed forever this tomb, the situation of which he alone could have found upon the map of burial-places preserved in the priests' college.

"I begin to believe," said the delighted scholar to the young nobleman, "that we have actually found a prize, and I withdraw the unfavourable opinion which I expressed about this worthy Greek."

"Perhaps we are rejoicing too soon," answered Lord Evandale, "and we may experience the same disappointment as Belzoni, when he believed himself to be the first to enter the tomb of Menephtha Seti, and found, after he had traversed a labyrinth of passages, walls, and chambers, an empty sarcophagus with a broken cover; for the treasure-seekers had reached the royal tomb through one of their soundings driven in at another point in the mountain."

"Oh, no," answered the doctor; "the range is too broad here and the hypogeum too distant from the others for these wretched people to have carried their mines as far as this, even if they scraped away the rock."

While this conversation was going on, the workmen,

urged by Argyropoulos, proceeded to lift the great stone slab which filled up the orifice of the passage. As they cleared away the slab in order to pass their crow-bars under it, for Lord Evandale had ordered that nothing should be broken, they turned up in the sand innumerable small statuettes a few inches in height, of blue and green enamelled ware, of admirable workmanship, — tiny funeral statuettes deposited there as offerings by parents and friends, just as we place flowers on the thresholds of our funeral chapels ; only, our flowers wither, while after more than three thousand years these witnesses of long bygone griefs are found intact, for Egypt worked for eternity only.

When the door was lifted away, giving for the first time in thirty-five centuries entrance to the light of day, a puff of hot air escaped from the sombre opening as from the mouth of a furnace. The light, striking the entrance of the funeral passage, brought out brilliantly the colouring of the hieroglyphs engraved upon the walls in perpendicular lines upon a blue plinth. A reddish figure with a hawk's-head crowned with the *pschent*, the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, bore a disc containing a winged globe, and seemed to watch on the threshold of the tomb. Some fellahs

lighted torches and preceded the two travellers, who were accompanied by Argyropoulos. The resinous flame burned with difficulty in the dense, stifling air which had been concentrated for so many thousands of years under the heated limestone of the mountain, in the labyrinths, passages, and blind ways of the hypogeum. Rumphius breathed hard and perspired in streams; the impassible Evandale turned hot and felt a moisture on his temples. As for the Greek, the fiery wind of the desert had long since dried him up, and he perspired no more than would a mummy.

The passage led directly to the centre of the chain, following a vein of limestone of remarkable fineness and purity. At the end of the passageway a stone door, sealed as the other had been with a clay seal and surmounted by a winged globe, proved that the tomb had not been violated and pointed to the existence of another passageway sunk deeper still into the mountain.

The heat was now so intense that the young nobleman threw off his white coat, and the doctor his black one. These were soon followed by their vests and shirts. Argyropoulos, seeing that they were breathing with difficulty, whispered a few words to a fellah, who ran back to the entrance and brought two large sponges

filled with fresh water, which the Greek advised the two travellers to place on their mouths so that they might breathe a fresher air through the humid pores, as is done in Russian baths when the steam heat is raised to excess.

The door was attacked and soon gave way. A steep staircase cut in the living rock was then seen descending. Against a green background edged with a blue line were ranged on either side of the passage-way processions of symbolical statues, the colours of which were as bright and fresh as if the artist's brush had laid them on the day before. They would show for a second in the light of the torches, then vanish in the shadow like the phantoms of a dream. Below these narrow frescoes, lines of hieroglyphs, written perpendicularly like Chinese writing and separated by hollow lines, excited the erudite by the sacred mystery of their outlines. Along that portion of the walls which was not covered with hieratic signs, a jackal lying on its belly, with outstretched paws and pointed ears, and a kneeling figure wearing a mitre, its hand stretched upon a circle, seemed to stand as sentries on either side of the door, the lintel of which was ornamented with two panels placed side by side, in which

were figured two women wearing close-fitting gowns and extending their feathered arms like wings.

"Look here!" said the doctor, taking breath when he reached the foot of the staircase, and when he saw that the excavation sank deeper and deeper still. "Are we going down to the centre of the earth? The heat is increasing to such a degree that we cannot be far from the sojourn of the damned."

"No doubt," answered Lord Evandale, "they followed the vein of limestone, which sinks in accordance with the law of geological undulations."

Another very steep passage came after the steps. The walls were lower, covered with paintings, in which could be made out a series of allegorical scenes, explained, no doubt, by the hieroglyphs inscribed below. This frieze ran all along the passage, and below it were small figures worshipping sacred scarabæi and the azure-coloured symbolical serpent.

As he reached the end of the passage, the fellah who carried the torch threw himself back abruptly, for the path was suddenly interrupted by the mouth of a square well yawning black at the surface of the ground.

"There is a well, master," said the fellah, addressing himself to Argyropoulos; "what am I to do?"

The Greek took the torch, shook it to make it blaze up, and threw it into the small mouth of the well, bending cautiously over the opening. The torch fell, twisting and hissing. Soon a dull sound was heard, followed by a burst of sparks and a cloud of smoke, then the flame burned up bright and clear, and the opening of the well shone in the shadow like the bloodshot eye of a Cyclops.

"Most ingenious!" said the young nobleman. "This labyrinth, interrupted by oubliettes, must have cooled the zeal of robbers and scholars."

"Not at all," replied the doctor. "Those seek gold, these truth, which are the two most precious things in the world."

"Bring the knotted rope!" cried Argyropoulos to his Arabs. "We shall explore and sound the walls of the well, for the passage no doubt runs far beyond it."

Eight or ten men hung on to the rope, the end of which was let fall into the well. With the agility of a monkey or of an athlete, Argyropoulos caught hold of the swinging rope and let himself down some fifteen feet, holding on with his hands and striking with his heels the walls of the well. Wherever he struck the rock it gave out a dead, dull sound. Then Argyro-

poulos let himself fall to the bottom of the well and struck the ground with the hilt of his kandjar, but the compact rock did not resound. Lord Evandale and the doctor, burning with eager curiosity, bent over the edge at the risk of falling in headlong, and watched with intense interest the search undertaken by the Greek.

"Hold hard!" cried he at last, annoyed at finding nothing; and he seized the rope with his two hands to ascend.

The shadow of Argyropoulos, lighted from below by the torch which was still burning at the bottom of the well, was projected against the ceiling and cast on it a silhouette like that of a monstrous bird. His sunburned face expressed the liveliest disappointment, and under his moustache he was biting his lips.

"There is not a trace of a passage!" he cried; "and yet the excavation cannot stop here."

"Unless," said Rumphius, "the Egyptian who ordered this tomb died in some distant nome, on a voyage, or in battle, the work being then abandoned, as is known to have been the case occasionally."

"Let us hope that by dint of searching we shall find some secret issue," returned Lord Evandale; "other-

wise we shall try to drive a transverse shaft through the mountain."

"Those confounded Egyptians were clever indeed at concealing the entrances to their tombs, — always trying to find out some way of putting poor people off the track. One would think that they laughed in anticipation at the disappointment of searchers," grumbled Argyropoulos. Drawing to the edge of the well, the Greek cast a glance, as piercing as that of a night-bird, upon the wall of the little chamber which formed the upper portion of the well. He saw nothing but the ordinary characters of psychostasia, — Osiris the judge seated on his throne in the regulation attitude, holding the crook in the one hand, the whip in the other, and the goddesses of Justice and Truth leading the spirit of the dead to the tribunal of Amenti. Suddenly he seemed to be struck with a new idea, and turned sharply around. His long experience as an excavator recalled to him a somewhat analogous case. In addition, the desire of earning the thousand guineas of his lordship spurred up his faculties. He took a pick-axe from the hands of a fellah, and began, walking backward, to strike sharply right and left on the surface of the rock, often at the risk of damaging

some of the hieroglyphs or of breaking the beak or the wing-sheath of the sacred hawk or the scarabæus.

The wall, thus questioned, at last answered the hammer and sounded hollow. An exclamation of triumph broke from the Greek and his eyes flashed; the doctor and the nobleman clapped their hands.

"Dig here," said Argyropoulos, who had recovered his coolness, to his men.

An opening large enough to allow a man to pass through was made. A gallery running within the mountain around the obstacle which the well offered to the profane, led to a square hall, the blue vault of which rested upon four massive pillars ornamented by the red-skinned, white-garmented figures which so often show, in Egyptian frescoes, the full bust and the head in profile. This hall opened into another, the vault of which was somewhat higher and supported by two pillars only. Various scenes — the mystic bark, the bull Apis bearing the mummy towards the regions of the West, the judgment of the soul and the weighing of the deeds of the dead in the supreme scales, the offerings to the funeral divinities — adorned the pillars and the hall. They were carved in flat, low relief with sharp outline, but the painter's brush had

not completed the work of the chisel. By the care and delicacy of the work might be judged the importance of the personage whose tomb it had been sought to conceal from the knowledge of men.

After having spent a few moments in examining these carvings, which were in the purest manner of the fine Egyptian style of the classical age, the explorers perceived that there was no issue from the hall, and that they had reached a sort of blind place. The air was becoming somewhat rarified, the torches burned with difficulty and further augmented the heat of the atmosphere, while the smoke formed a dense pall. The Greek gave himself to the devil, but that did no good. Again the walls were sounded without any result. The mountain, thick and compact, gave back but a dead sound; there was no trace of a door, of a passage, or of any sort of opening.

The young nobleman was plainly discouraged, and the doctor let fall his arms by his side. Argyropoulos, who feared losing his thousand guineas, exhibited the fiercest despair. However, the party was compelled to retreat, for the heat had become absolutely suffocating.

They returned to the outer hall, and there the Greek, who could not make up his mind to see his

golden dream vanish in smoke, examined with the most minute attention the shafts of the pillars to make certain that they did not conceal some artifice, that they did not mask some trap which might be discovered by displacing them; for in his despair he mingled the realism of Egyptian architecture with the chimerical constructions of the Arab tales. The pillars, cut out of the mountain itself, in the centre of the hollowed mass, formed part of it, and it would have been necessary to employ gunpowder to break them down. All hope was gone.

"Nevertheless," said Rumphius, "this labyrinth was not dug for nothing. Somewhere or another there must be a passage like the one which goes around the well. No doubt the dead man was afraid of being disturbed by importunate persons and he had himself carefully concealed; but with patience and perseverance you can get anywhere. Perhaps a slab carefully concealed, the joint of which cannot be seen, owing to the dust scattered over the ground, covers some descent which leads, directly or indirectly, to the funeral hall."

"You are right, doctor," said Evandale; "those accursed Egyptians jointed stones as closely as the hinges of an English trap. Let us go on looking."

The doctor's idea struck the Greek as sound, and he made his fellahs walk about every part and corner of the hall, tapping the ground. At last, not far from the third pillar a dull resonance struck on the practised ear of the Greek. He threw himself on his knees to examine the spot, brushing away with the ragged burnouse one of his Arabs had thrown him the impalpable dust of thirty-five centuries. A black, narrow, sharp line showed, and, carefully followed out, marked out on the ground an oblong slab.

"Did I not tell you," cried the enthusiastic doctor, "that the passage could not end in this way?"

"I am really troubled," said Lord Evandale, in his quaint, phlegmatic British fashion, "at disturbing the last sleep of the poor unknown body which did expect to rest in peace until the end of the world. The dweller below would willingly dispense with our visit."

"The more so that a third party is lacking to make the presentation formal," replied the doctor. "But do not be anxious, my lord, I have lived long enough in the days of the Pharaohs to present you to the illustrious personage who inhabits this subterranean passage."

Crow-bars were applied to the narrow fissure, and after a short time the stone moved and was raised. A

staircase with high, steep steps, sinking into darkness, awaited the impatient travellers, who rushed down pell-mell. A sloping gallery painted on both walls with figures and hieroglyphs came next, then at the end of the gallery some more steps leading to a short corridor, a sort of vestibule to a hall in the same style as the first one, but larger and upborne by six pillars cut out of the living rock. The ornamentation was richer, and the usual motives of funeral paintings were multiplied on a yellow background. To the right and to the left opened in the rock two small crypts or chambers filled with funeral statuettes of enamelled ware, bronze, and sycamore wood.

"We are in the antechamber of the hall where the sarcophagus is bound to be!" cried Rumphius, his clear gray eyes flashing with joy from below his spectacles, which he had pushed back over his forehead.

"Up to the present," said Lord Evandale, "the Greek has kept his word. We are the first living men who have penetrated so far since the dead, whoever he may be, was left with eternity and the unknown in this tomb."

"Oh, he must be some great personage," replied the doctor; "a king or a king's son, at the very least. I

shall tell you later when I have deciphered his cartouche. But first let us enter this hall, the finest, the most important, which the Egyptians called the Golden Hall."

Lord Evandale walked ahead, a few steps before the less agile scholar, though perhaps the latter deferentially wished to leave the pleasure of the discovery to the young nobleman.

As he was about to step across the threshold, Lord Evandale bent forward as if something unexpected had struck him. Though accustomed not to manifest his emotions, he was unable to repress a prolonged and thoroughly British "Oh!" On the fine gray powder which covered the ground showed very distinctly, with the imprint of the toes and the great bone of the heel, the shape of a human foot, — the foot of the last priest or the last friend who had withdrawn, fifteen hundred years before Christ, after having paid the last honours to the dead. The dust, which in Egypt is as eternal as granite, had moulded the print and preserved it for more than thirty centuries, just as the hardened diluvian mud has preserved the tracks of the animals which last traversed it.

"See," said Evandale to Rumphius, "that human

footprint which is directed towards the exit from the hypogeum! In what narrow passage of the Libyan chain rests the mummified body that made it?"

"Who knows?" replied the scholar. "In any case, that light print, which a breath would have blown away, has lasted longer than empires, than religions and monuments believed eternal. The noble dust of Alexander was used perhaps to stop a bung-hole, as Hamlet says, but the footprint of this unknown Egyptian remains on the threshold of a tomb."

Urged by a curiosity which did not allow them much time for recollection, the nobleman and the doctor entered the hall, taking care, nevertheless, not to efface the wondrous footprint. On entering, the impassible Evandale felt a strange emotion; it seemed to him, as Shakespeare says, that the time was out of joint. The feeling of modern life vanished, he forgot Great Britain and his name inscribed on the rolls of the peerage, his seat in Lincolnshire, his mansion in the West End, Hyde Park, Piccadilly, the Queen's Drawing-Room, the Yacht Squadron, and all that constituted his English existence. An invisible hand had turned upside down the sand-glass of eternity, and the centuries which had

fallen one by one, like the hours, in the solitude of the night, were falling once more. History was as if it were not: Moses was living, Pharaoh was reigning, and he, Lord Evandale, felt embarrassed because he did not wear his beard in ringlets, and had not an enamelled neck-plate and a narrow vestment wrinkling in folds upon his hips, — the only suitable dress in which to be presented to a royal mummy. A sort of religious horror filled him, although there was nothing sinister about the place, as he violated this palace of death so carefully protected against profanation. His attempt seemed to him impious and sacrilegious, and he said to himself, "Suppose this Pharaoh were to rise on his couch and strike me with his sceptre." For one moment he thought of letting fall the shroud half lifted from the body of this antique, dead civilisation, but the doctor, carried away by scientific enthusiasm, and not a prey to such thoughts, shouted in a loud voice, "My lord, my lord, the sarcophagus is intact!"

These words recalled Lord Evandale to reality. By swift projection of his thought he traversed the thirty-five hundred years which he had gone back in his reverie, and he answered, "Indeed, dear doctor, intact?"

"Oh, unexpected luck! oh, marvellous chance! oh, wondrous find!" continued the doctor, in the excitement of a scholarly joy.

Argyropoulos, on beholding the doctor's enthusiasm, felt a pang of remorse, — the only kind of remorse that he could feel, — at not having asked more than twenty-five thousand francs. "I was a fool!" he said to himself. "This shall not happen again. That nobleman has robbed me."

In order to enable the strangers to enjoy the beauty of the spectacle, the fellahs had lighted all their torches. The sight was indeed strange and magnificent. The galleries and halls which led to the sarcophagus hall were flat-ceiled and not more than eight or ten feet high; but the sanctuary, the one to which all these labyrinths led, was of much greater proportions. Lord Evandale and Dr. Rumphius remained dumb with admiration, although they were already familiar with the funereal splendours of Egyptian art. Thus lighted up, the Golden Hall flamed, and for the first time, perhaps, the colours of the paintings shone in all their brilliancy. Red and blue, green and white, of virginal purity, brilliantly fresh and amazingly clear, stood out from the golden background of the figures and hieroglyphs, and

attracted the eye before the subjects which they formed could be discerned. At first glance it looked like a vast tapestry of the richest stuffs. The vault, some thirty feet high, formed a sort of azure velarium bordered with long yellow palm-leaves. On the walls the symbolical globe spread its mighty wings and the royal cartouches showed around. Farther on, Isis and Nephthys waved their arms furnished with feathers like wings; the uræus swelled its blue throat, the scarabæus unfolded its wings, the animal-headed gods pricked up their jackal ears, sharpened their hawk's-beaks, wrinkled their baboon faces, and drew into their shoulders their vulture or serpent necks as if they were endowed with life. Mystical consecrated boats (*baris*) passed by on their sledges drawn by figures in attitudes of sadness, with angular gestures, or propelled by half-naked oarsmen, they floated upon symbolical undulating waves. Mourners kneeling, their hand placed on their blue hair in token of grief, turned towards the catafalques, while shaven priests, leopard-skin on shoulder, burned perfumes in a spatula terminating in a hand bearing a cup under the nose of the godlike dead. Other personages offered to the funeral genii lotus in bloom or in bud, bulbous plants, birds, pieces of ante-

lope, and vases of liquors. Acephalous figures of Justice brought souls before Osiris, whose arms were set in inflexible contour, and who was assisted by the forty-two judges of Amenti, seated in two rows and bearing an ostrich-plume on their heads, the forms of which were borrowed from every realm of zoölogy.

All these figures, drawn in hollowed lines in the limestone and painted in the brightest colours, were endowed with that motionless life, that frozen motion, that mysterious intensity of Egyptian art, which was hemmed in by the priestly rule, and which resembles a gagged man trying to utter his secret.

In the centre of the hall rose, massive and splendid, the sarcophagus, cut out of a solid block of black basalt and closed by a cover of the same material, carved in the shape of an arch. The four sides of the funeral monolith were covered with figures and hieroglyphs as carefully engraved as the intaglio of a gem, although the Egyptians did not know the use of iron, and the grain of basalt is hard enough to blunt the best-tempered steel. Imagination loses itself when it tries to discover the process by which that marvellous people wrought on porphyry and granite as with a style on wax tablets.

At the angles of the sarcophagus were set four vases of oriental alabaster, of most elegant and perfect outline, the carved covers of which represented the man's head of 'Amset, the monkey head of Hapi, the jackal head of Tuamutef, and the hawk head of Kebhsnauf. The vases contained the visceræ of the mummy enclosed in the sarcophagus. At the head of the tomb an effigy of Osiris with plaited beard seemed to watch over the dead. Two coloured statues of women stood right and left of the tomb, supporting, with one hand a square box on their head, and holding in the other a vase for ablutions which they rested on their hip. The one was dressed in a simple white skirt clinging to the hips and held up by crossed braces; the other, more richly costumed, was wrapped in a sort of narrow shift, covered with scales alternately red and green. By the side of the first there were three water-jars, originally filled with Nile water, which, as it evaporated, had left its mud, and a plate holding some alimentary paste, now dried up. By the side of the second, two small ships, like the model ships made in seaports, which reproduced accurately, the one the minutest details of the boats destined to bear the bodies from Diospolis to Memnonia, the other the symbolical boat in which the

soul is carried to the regions of the West. Nothing was forgotten, — neither the masts, nor the rudder formed of one long sweep, nor the pilot, nor the oarsmen, nor the mummy surrounded by mourners and lying under the shrine on a bed with feet formed of lion's claws, nor the allegorical figures of the funeral divinities fulfilling their sacred functions. Both the boats and the figures were painted in brilliant colours, and on the two sides of the prow, beak-like as the poop, showed the great Osiris' eye, made longer still by the use of antimony. The bones and skull of an ox scattered here and there showed that a victim had been offered up as a scapegoat to the Fate which might have disturbed the repose of the dead. Coffers painted and bedizened with hieroglyphs were placed on the tomb; reed tables yet bore the final offerings. Nothing had been touched in this palace of death since the day when the mummy in its cartonnage and its two coffins had been placed upon its basalt couch. The worm of the sepulchre, which can find a way through the closest biers, had itself retreated, driven back by the bitter scent of the bitumen and the aromatic essences.

"Shall I open the sarcophagus?" said Argyropou-

los, after Lord Evandale and Doctor Rumphius had had time to admire the beauty of the Golden Hall.

"Unquestionably," replied the nobleman; "but take care not to chip the edges of the cover as you put in your crow-bars, for I propose to carry off the tomb and present it to the British Museum."

The whole company bent their efforts to displacing the monolith. Wooden wedges were carefully driven in, and presently the huge stone was moved and slid down the props prepared to receive it. The sarcophagus having been opened, showed the first bier hermetically sealed. It was a coffer adorned with paintings and gilding, representing a sort of shrine with symmetrical designs, lozenges, quadrilles, palm leaves, and lines of hieroglyphs. The cover was opened, and Rumphius, who was bending over the sarcophagus, uttered a cry of surprise when he discovered the contents of the coffin, having recognised the sex of the mummy by the absence of the Osiris beard and the shape of the cartonnage. The Greek himself appeared amazed. His long experience in excavations enabled him to understand the strangeness of such a find. The valley of Biban el Molûk contains the tombs of kings only: the necropolis of the queens is situated farther away, in an-

other mountain gorge. The tombs of the queens are very simple, and usually consist of two or three passage-ways and one or two rooms. Women in the East have always been considered as inferior to men, even in death. Most of these tombs, which were broken into at a very distant period, were used as receptacles for shapeless mummies carelessly embalmed, which still exhibit traces of leprosy and elephantiasis. How did this woman's coffin come to occupy this royal sarcophagus, in the centre of this cryptic palace worthy of the most illustrious and most powerful of the Pharaohs?

"This," said the doctor to Lord Evandale, "upsets all my notions and all my theories. It overthrows the system most carefully built upon the Egyptian funeral rites, which nevertheless have been so carefully followed out during thousands of years. No doubt we have come upon some obscure point, some forgotten mystery of history. A woman did ascend the throne of the Pharaohs and did govern Egypt. She was called Tahoser, as we learn from the cartouches engraved upon older inscriptions hammered away. She usurped the tomb as she usurped the throne. Or perhaps some other ambitious woman, of whom history has preserved no trace, renewed her attempt."

"No one is better able to solve this difficult problem than you," said Lord Evandale. "We will carry this box full of secrets to our boat, where you will, at your leisure, decipher this historic document and read the riddle set by these hawks, scarabæi, kneeling figures, serrated lines, winged uræus, and spatula hands, which you read as readily as did the great Champollion."

The fellahs, under the orders of Argyropoulos, carried off the huge coffer on their shoulders, and the mummy, performing in an inverse direction the funeral travel it had accomplished in the days of Moses, in a painted and gilded bari preceded by a long procession, was embarked upon the sandal which had brought the travellers, soon reached the vessel moored on the Nile, and was placed in the cabin, which was not unlike, so little do forms change in Egypt, the shrine of the funeral boat.

Argyropoulos, having arranged about the box all the objects which had been found near it, stood respectfully at the cabin door and appeared to be waiting. Lord Evandale understood, and ordered his valet to pay him the twenty-five thousand francs.

The open bier was placed upon rests in the centre of the cabin; it shone as brilliantly as if the colours

had been put on the day before, and framed in the mummy, moulded within its cartonnage, the workmanship of which was remarkably fine and rich. Never had ancient Egypt more carefully wrapped up one of her children for the eternal sleep. Although no shape was indicated by the funeral Hermes, ending in a sheath from which stood out alone the shoulders and the head, one could guess there was under that thick envelope a young and graceful form. The gilded mask, with its long eyes outlined with black and brightened with enamel, the nose with its delicate nostrils, the rounded cheek-bones, the half-open lips smiling with an indescribable, sphinx-like smile, the chin somewhat short in curve but of extreme beauty of contour, presented the purest type of the Egyptian ideal, and testified by a thousand small, characteristic details which art cannot invent, to the individual character of the portrait. Numberless fine plaits of hair, tressed with cords and separated by bandeaux, fell in opulent masses on either side of the face. A lotus stem, springing from the back of the neck, bowed over the head and opened its azure calyx over the dead, cold brow, completing with a funeral cone this rich and elegant head-dress.

A broad necklace, composed of fine enamels cloisonnés with gold and formed of several rows, lay upon the lower portion of the neck, and allowed to be seen the clean, firm contour of two virgin breasts like two golden cups.

The sacred ram-headed bird, bearing between its green horns the red disc of the setting sun and supported by two serpents wearing the pschent and swelling out their hoods, showed on the bosom of the figure its monstrous form full of symbolic meaning. Lower down, in the spaces left free by the crossed zones, and rayed with brilliant colours representing bandages, the vulture of Phra, crowned with a globe, with outspread wings, the body covered with symmetrically arranged feathers, and the tail spread out fanwise, held in its talons the huge Tau, emblem of immortality. The funeral gods, green-faced, with the mouths of monkeys or jackals, held out with a gesture hieratic in its stiffness the whip, the crook, and the sceptre. The eye of Osiris opened its red ball outlined with antimony. Celestial snakes swelled their hoods around the sacred discs; symbolical figures projected their feathered arms; and the two goddesses of the Beginning and the End, their hair powdered with blue dust,

bare down to below the breasts and the rest of the body wrapped in a close-fitting skirt, knelt in Egyptian fashion on green and red cushions adorned with heavy tufts.

A longitudinal band of hieroglyphs, springing from the belt and running down to the feet, contained no doubt some formal funeral ritual, or rather, the names and titles of the deceased, a problem which Dr. Rumphius promised himself to solve later.

The character of the drawing, the boldness of the lines, the brilliancy of the colours in all these paintings denoted in the plainest manner to a practised eye that they belonged to the finest period of Egyptian art. When the English nobleman and his companion had sufficiently studied this outer case, they drew the cartonnage from the box and set it up against the side of the cabin, where the funeral form, with its gilded mask, presented a strange spectacle, standing upright like a materialised spectre and with a seeming attitude of life, after having preserved so long the horizontal attitude of death on a basalt bed in the heart of the mountain, opened up by impious curiosity. The soul of the deceased, which had reckoned on eternal rest and which had taken such care to preserve

its remains from violation, must have been moved, beyond the worlds, in the circuit of its travels and transmigrations.

Dr. Rumphius, armed with a chisel and a hammer, to separate the two parts of the cartonnage of the mummy, looked like one of those funeral genii which wear a bestial mask and which are seen in the paintings of the hypogea crowding around the dead in the performance of some frightful and mysterious rite; the clean profile of Lord Evandale, calm and attentive, made him look like the divine Osiris awaiting the soul to be judged.

The operation having been at length completed — for the doctor wished not to scale off the gilding, — the box, resting on the ground, was separated into two parts like the casing of a cast, and the mummy appeared in all the brilliancy of its death toilet, coquettishly adorned as if it had wished to charm the genii of the subterranean realms. On opening the case, a faint, delightful, aromatic odour of cedar liquor, of sandal powder, of myrrh and cinnamon spread through the cabin of the vessel; for the body had not been gummed up and hardened with the black bitumen used in embalming the bodies of ordinary persons, and

all the skill of the embalmers, the former inhabitants of Memnonia, seemed to have been directed to the preservation of these precious remains.

The head was enveloped in a network of narrow bands of fine linen, through which the face showed faintly. The essences in which they had been steeped had dyed the tissue a beautiful tawny tint. Over the breast a network of fine tubes of blue glass, very like the long jet beads which are used to embroider Spanish bodices, with little golden drops wherever the tubes crossed, fell down to the feet and formed a pearly shroud worthy of a queen. The statuettes of the four gods of Amenti in hammered gold shone brilliantly, and were symmetrically arranged along the upper edge of the network, which ended below in a fringe of most tasteful ornaments. Between the statuettes of the funeral gods was a golden plate, above which a lapis-lazuli scarabæus spread out its long golden wings. Under the mummy's head was placed a rich mirror of polished metal, as if it had been desired to give the dead soul an opportunity of beholding the spectre of its beauty during the long night of the tomb. By the mirror lay a coffer of enamelled ware, of most precious workmanship, which

contained a necklace composed of ivory rings alternating with beads, gold, lapis-lazuli, and cornelian. By the side of the beauty had been placed also a narrow, square sandal-wood basin in which, during her lifetime, the dead woman had performed her perfumed ablutions. Three vases of wavy alabaster fastened to the bier, as was also the mummy, by a layer of natron, contained, the first two, essences, the scent of which could still be noticed, and the third, antimony powder and a small spatula for the purpose of colouring the edge of the eyelids and extending the outer angle according to the antique Egyptian usage, still practised at the present time by Eastern women.

"What a touching custom!" said Dr. Rumphius, excited by the sight of these treasures; "what a touching custom it was to bury with a young woman all her pretty toilet articles! For it is a young woman unquestionably that these linen bands, yellow with time and with essences, envelop. Compared with the Egyptians, we are downright barbarians; hurried on by our brutal way of living, we have lost the delicate sense of death. How much tenderness, how much regard, how much love do not these minute

cares reveal, these infinite precautions, these useless caresses bestowed upon a senseless body, — that struggle to snatch from destruction an adored form and to restore it intact to the soul on the day of the supreme reunion ! "

" Perhaps," replied Lord Evandale, very thoughtful, " our civilisation, which we think so highly developed, is, after all, but a great decadence which has lost even the historical remembrance of the gigantic societies which have disappeared. We are stupidly proud of a few ingenious pieces of mechanism which we have recently invented, and we forget the colossal splendours and the vast works impossible to any other nation, which are found in the ancient land of the Pharaohs. We have steam, but steam is less powerful than the force which built the Pyramids, dug out hypogea, carved mountains into the shapes of sphinxes and obelisks, sealed halls with one great stone which all our engines could not move, cut out monolithic chapels, and saved frail human remains from annihilation, — so deep a sense of eternity did it already possess."

" Oh, the Egyptians," said Dr. Rumphius, smiling, " were wonderful architects, amazing artists, and great

scholars. A priest of Memphis and of Thebes could have taught even our German scholars; and as regards symbolism, they were greater than any symbolists of our day. But we shall succeed eventually in deciphering their hieroglyphs and penetrating their mysteries. The great Champollion has made out their alphabet; we shall easily read their granite books. Meanwhile, let us strip, as delicately as possible, this young beauty who is more than three thousand years of age."

"Poor woman!" murmured the young lord. "Profane eyes will now behold the mysterious charms which love itself perhaps never saw. Truly, under the empty pretext of scientific pursuit, we are as barbarous as the Persians of Cambyses, and if I were not afraid of driving to despair this worthy scholar, I should enclose you again, without having stripped off your last veil, within the triple box of your bier."

Dr. Rumphius raised from the casing the mummy, which was no heavier than a child's body, and began to unwrap it with motherly skill and lightness of touch. He first of all undid the outer envelope of linen, sewed together and impregnated with palm

wine, and the broad bands which here and there girdled the body. Then he took hold of the end of a thin, narrow band, the infinite windings of which enclosed the limbs of the young Egyptian. He rolled up the band on itself as cleverly as the most skilful embalmer of the City of the Dead, following it up in all its meanderings and circumvolutions. As he progressed in his work, the mummy, freed from its envelope, like a statue which a sculptor blocks out of the marble, appeared more slender and exquisite in form. The bandage having been unrolled, another narrower one was seen, intended to bind the body more closely. It was of such fine linen, and so finely woven, that it was comparable to modern cambric and muslin. This bandage followed accurately every outline, imprisoning the fingers and the toes, moulding like a mask the features of the face, which was visible through the thin tissue. The aromatic balm in which it had been steeped had stiffened it, and as it came away under the fingers of the doctor, it gave out a little dry sound like that of paper that is being crushed or torn. There remained but one turn to be taken off, and familiar though he was with such work, Dr. Rumphius stopped for a moment, either

through respect for the dead, or through that feeling which prevents a man from breaking open a letter, from opening a door, from raising a veil which hides a secret that he burns to learn. He ascribed his momentary pause to fatigue, and as a matter of fact, the perspiration was dripping from his forehead without his thinking of wiping it with his great blue-checked handkerchief; but fatigue had nothing to do with it Meanwhile the dead form showed through the fine, gauze-like stuff, and some gold work shone faintly through it as well.

The last wrapping taken off, the young woman showed in the chaste nudity of her lovely form, preserving, in spite of so many centuries that had passed away, the fulness of her contours, and the easy grace of her pure lines. Her pose, an infrequent one in the case of mummies, was that of the Venus of Medici, as if the embalmers had wished to save this beautiful body from the set attitude of death and to soften the inflexible rigidity of the cadaver.

A cry of admiration was uttered at the same time by Rumphius and Evandale at the sight of the marvel. Never did a Greek or Roman statue present a more beautiful appearance. The peculiar characteristics of

the Egyptian ideal gave indeed to this lovely body, so miraculously preserved, a slenderness and a grace lacking in antique marbles, — the long hands, the high-bred, narrow feet, the nails shining like agate, the slender waist, the shape of the breasts, small and turned up like a sandal beneath the veil which enveloped it, the slightly protruding contour of the hip, the roundness of the thigh, the somewhat long leg recalling the slender grace of the musicians and dancers represented on the frescoes of funeral repasts in the Thebes hypogea. It was a shape still childish in its gracefulness, yet possessing already all the perfections of a woman which Egyptian art expresses with such tender suavity, whether it paints the walls of the passages with a brush, or whether it patiently carves the hard basalt.

As a general rule mummies which have been filled with bitumen and natron resemble black simulacra carved in ebony; corruption cannot attack them, but the appearance of life is wholly lacking; the bodies have not returned to the dust whence they came, but they have been petrified in a hideous shape, which one cannot contemplate without disgust and terror. In this case, the body, carefully prepared by

surer, longer, and more costly processes, had preserved the elasticity of the flesh, the grain of the skin, and almost its natural colour. The skin, of a light brown, had the golden tint of a new Florentine bronze, and the amber, warm tone which is admired in the paintings of Giorgione and Titian covered with a smoky varnish, was not very different from what must have been the complexion of the young Egyptian during her lifetime. She seemed to be asleep rather than dead. The eyelids, still fringed with their long lashes, allowed eyes lustrous with the humid gleam of life to shine between their lines of antimony. One could have sworn they were about to shake off, as a light dream, their sleep of thirty centuries. The nose, delicate and fine, preserved its pure outline; no depression deformed the cheeks, which were as round as the side of a vase; the mouth, coloured with a faint blush, had preserved its imperceptible lines, and on the lips, voluptuously moulded, fluttered a melancholy and mysterious smile, full of gentleness, sadness, and charm, — that tender and resigned smile which pouts so prettily the lips of the adorable heads which surmount the Canopean vases in the Louvre.

Around the forehead, low and smooth in accordance with the laws of antique beauty, was massed jet-black hair divided and plaited into a multitude of fine tresses which fell on either shoulder. Twenty golden pins stuck into the tresses, like flowers in a ball head-dress, studded with brilliant points the thick dark hair which might have been thought artificial, so abundant was it. Two great earrings, round discs resembling small bucklers, shimmered with yellow light by the side of the brown cheeks. A magnificent necklace, composed of three rows of divinities and amulets in gold and precious stones, encircled the neck of the coquettish mummy, and lower down upon her breast hung two other collars, the pearl, gold, lapis-lazuli, and cornelian rosettes of which alternated symmetrically with the most perfect taste. A girdle of nearly the same design enclosed her waist with a belt of gold and gems. A double bracelet of gold and cornelian beads adorned her left wrist, and on the index of the left hand shone a very small scarabæus of golden cloisonné enamel, which formed a seal ring and was held by a gold thread most marvellously plaited.

Strange were the sensations of the two men as they found themselves face to face with a human being who

had lived in the days when history was yet young and was collecting the stories told by tradition; face to face with a body contemporary with Moses, which yet preserved the exquisite form of youth; as they touched the gentle little hand impregnated with perfumes, which a Pharaoh perhaps had kissed; as they fingered the hair, more durable than empire, more solid than granite monuments. At the sight of the lovely dead girl, the young nobleman felt the retrospective desire often inspired by the sight of a statue or a painting representing a woman of past days famous for her beauty. It seemed to him that he would have loved, had he lived three thousand years earlier, that beauty which nothingness had refused to destroy; and the sympathetic thought perhaps reached the restless soul that fluttered above its profaned frame.

Far less poetic than the young nobleman, Dr. Rumphius was making the inventory of the gems, without, however, taking them off; for Evandale had ordered that the mummy should not be deprived of this last frail consolation. To take away gems from a woman, even dead, is to kill her a second time. Suddenly a papyrus roll concealed between the side and arm of the mummy caught the doctor's eye.

"Oh!" said he, "this is no doubt a copy of the funeral ritual placed in the inner coffin and written with more or less care according to the wealth and rank of the person."

He unrolled the delicate band with infinite precautions. As soon as the first lines showed, he exhibited surprise, for he did not recognise the ordinary figures and signs of the ritual. In vain he sought in the usual places for the vignettes representing the funeral, which serve as a frontispiece to such papyri, nor did he find the Litany of the Hundred Names of Osiris, nor the soul's passport, nor the petition to the gods of Amenti. Drawings of a peculiar kind illustrated entirely different scenes connected with human life, and not with the voyage of the shade to the world beyond. Chapters and paragraphs seemed to be indicated by characters written in red, evidently for the purpose of distinguishing them from the remainder of the text, which was in black, and of calling the attention of the reader to interesting points. An inscription placed at the head appeared to contain the title of the work, and the name of the grammat who had written or copied it, — so much, at least, did the sagacious intuition of the doctor make out at the first glance.

"Undoubtedly, my lord, we have robbed Master Argyropoulos," said he to Evandale, as he pointed out the differences between the papyrus and the usual ritual. "This is the first time that an Egyptian manuscript has been found to contain anything else than hieratic formulæ. I am bound to decipher it, even if it costs me my sight, even if my beard grows thrice around my desk. Yes, I shall ferret out your secret, mysterious Egypt! Yes, I shall learn your story, you lovely dead; for that papyrus pressed close to your heart by your lovely arm surely contains it. And I shall be covered with glory, become the equal of Champollion, and make Lepsius die of jealousy."

The nobleman and the doctor returned to Europe. The mummy, wrapped up again in all its bandages and replaced within its three cases, rests within Lord Evandale's park in Lincolnshire, in the basalt sarcophagus which he brought at great expense from Biban el Molûk and which he did not give to the British Museum. Sometimes Lord Evandale leans upon the sarcophagus, sinks into a deep reverie, and sighs.

After three years of unflagging application, Dr. Rumphius succeeded in deciphering the mysterious

papyrus, save in some damaged parts, and in others which contained unknown signs. And it is his translation into Latin — which we have turned into French — that you are about to read, under the name, "The Romance of a Mummy."

The Romance of a Mummy

I

OPH (that is the name of the city which antiquity called Thebes of the Hundred Gates, or Diospolis Magna), seemed asleep under the burning beams of the blazing sun. It was noon. A white light fell from the pale sky upon the baked earth; the sand, shimmering and scintillating, shone like burnished metal; shadows there were none, save a narrow, bluish line at the foot of buildings, like the inky line with which an architect draws upon papyrus; the houses, whose walls sloped well inwards, glowed like bricks in an oven; every door was closed, and no one showed at the windows, which were closed with blinds of reeds.

At the end of the deserted streets and above the terraces stood out in the hot, transparent air the tips of obelisks, the tops of pylons, the entablatures of palaces and temples, whose capitals, formed of human faces or lotus flowers, showed partially, breaking the horizontal lines of the roofs and rising like reefs amid the mass

of private buildings. Here and there above a garden wall shot up the scaly trunk of a palm tree ending in a plume of leaves, not one of which stirred, for never a breath blew. Acacias, mimosas, and Pharaoh fig-trees formed a cascade of foliage that cast a narrow blue shadow upon the dazzling brilliancy of the ground. These green spots refreshed and enlivened the solemn aridity of the picture, which but for them would have been that of a dead city.

A few slaves of the Nahasi race, black complexioned, monkey-faced, with bestial gait, alone braving the heat of the day, were bearing to their masters' homes the water drawn from the Nile in jars that were hung from a stick placed on their shoulder. Although they wore nothing but striped drawers wrinkling on their hips, their torsos, brilliant and polished like basalt, streamed with perspiration as they quickened their pace lest they should scorch the thick soles of their feet on the pavements, which were as hot as the floor of a vapour bath. The boatmen were asleep in the cabins of their boats moored to the brick wall of the river quay, sure that no one would waken them to cross to the other bank, where lay the Memnonia quarter. In the highest heaven wheeled vultures, whose shrill

call, that at any other time would have been lost in the rumour of the city, could be plainly heard in the general silence. On the cornices of the monuments two or three ibises, one leg drawn up under their body, their long bill resting on their breast, seemed to be meditating deeply, and stood out against the calcined, whitish blue which formed the background.

And yet all did not sleep. From the walls of a great palace whose entablature, adorned with palmettoes, made a long, straight line against the flaming sky, there came a faint murmur of music. These bursts of harmony spread now and then through the diaphanous shimmer of the atmosphere, and the eye might almost have followed their sonorous undulations. Deadened by the thickness of the walls, the music was strangely sweet. It was a song voluptuously sad, wearily languorous, expressing bodily fatigue and the discouragement of passion. It was full of the eternal weariness of the luminous azure, of the indescribable helplessness of hot countries. As the slave passed by the wall, forgetting the master's lash he would suspend his walk and stop to breathe in that song, impregnated with all the secret homesickness of the soul, which made him think of his far

distant country, of his lost love, and of the insurmountable obstacles of fate. Whence came that song, that sigh softly breathed in the silence of the city? What restless soul was awake when all around was asleep?

The straight lines and the monumental appearance of the façade of the palace, which looked upon the face of the square, were typical of the civil and religious architecture of Egypt. The dwelling could belong to a princely or a priestly family only. So much was readily seen from the materials of which it was built, the careful construction, and the richness of the ornamentation.

In the centre of the façade rose a great building flanked by two wings surmounted by a roof in the form of a truncated triangle. A broad, deeply cut moulding of striking profile ended the wall, in which was visible no opening other than a door placed, not symmetrically in the centre, but in the corner of the building, no doubt to allow ample space for the staircase within. A cornice in the same style as the entablature surmounted this single door. The building projected from a wall on which rested like balconies two stories of galleries, resembling open porticoes,

composed of pillars singularly fantastic in style. The bases of these pillars represented huge lotus-buds, from the capsule of which, as it opened its dentelated rim, sprang the shaft like a giant pistil, swelling below, more slender at the top, girdled under the capital by a collar of mouldings, and ending in a half-blown flower. Between the broad bays were small windows with their sashes in two parts filled with stained glass. Above ran a terraced roof flagged with huge slabs of stone.

On the outer galleries great clay vases, rubbed inside with bitter almonds and closed with leaves, resting upon wooden pedestals, cooled the Nile water in the draughts of air. Tables bore pyramids of fruits, sheaves of flowers and drinking-cups of different shapes; for the Egyptians love to eat in the open air, and take their meals, so to speak, upon the public street. On either side of the main building stretched others rising to the height of one story only, formed of a row of pillars engaged half-way up in a wall divided into panels in such a manner as to form around the house a shelter closed to the sun and the gaze of the outer world. All these buildings, enlivened by ornamental paintings, — for the capitals,

the shafts, the cornices, and the panels were coloured, — produced a delightful and superb effect.

The door opened into a vast court surrounded by a quadrilateral portico supported by pillars, the capitals of which showed on each face a woman's head, with the ears of a cow, long, narrow eyes, slightly flattened noses, and a broad smile; each wore a thick red cushion and supported a cap of hard sandstone. Under the portico opened the doors of the apartments, into which the light came softened by the shade of the galleries. In the centre of the court sparkled in the sunshine a pool of water, edged with a margin of Syêné granite. On the surface of the pond spread the heart-shaped leaves of the lotus, the rose and blue flowers of which were half closed as if overcome by the heat in spite of the water in which they were plunged. In the flower-beds around the pool were planted flowers arranged fanlike upon small hillocks, and along the narrow walks laid out between the beds walked carefully two tame storks, which from time to time snapped their bills and fluttered their wings as if about to take flight. At the angles of the court the twisted trunks of four huge persæas exhibited a mass of metallic green foliage. At the end a sort

of pylon broke the portico, and its large bay, framing in the blue air, showed at the end of a long avenue a summer kiosk of rich and elegant design. In the compartments traced on the right and on the left of the arbour by dwarf trees cut into the shape of cones, bloomed pomegranates, sycamores, tamarinds, periplocas, mimosas, and acacias, the flowers of which shone like coloured lights on the deep green of the foliage which overhung the walls.

The faint, sweet music of which we have spoken proceeded from one of the rooms which opened into the interior portico. Although the sun shone full into the court, the ground of which blazed in the flood of light, a blue, cool shadow, transparently intense, filled the apartment, in which the eye, blinded by the dazzling reverberation, sought to distinguish shapes and at last made them out when it had become accustomed to the semi-light. A tender lilac tone overspread the walls of the room, around which ran a cornice painted in brilliant tones and enriched with small golden palm-branches. Architectural designs skilfully combined formed on the plain spaces panels which framed in ornaments, sheaves of flowers, birds, diapers of contrasted colours, and scenes of domestic life.

At the back, near the wall, stood a strangely shaped bed, representing an ox wearing ostrich-feathers with a disc between its horns, broadening its back to receive the sleeper upon a thin red mattress, and stiffening by way of feet its black legs ending in green hoofs, while its curled-up tail was divided into two tufts. This quadruped bed, this piece of animal furniture, would have seemed strange in any other country than Egypt, where lions and jackals are also turned into beds by the fancy of the workmen.

In front of the couch was placed a stool with four steps, which gave access to it: at the head, a pillow of Oriental alabaster, destined to support the neck without deranging the head-dress, was hollowed out in the shape of a half moon. In the centre a table of precious wood carved with exceeding care, stood upon a richly carved pedestal. A number of objects were placed upon it: a pot of lotus flowers, a mirror of polished bronze on an ivory stand, a vase of moss agate filled with antimony powder, a perfume spatula of sycamore wood in the shape of a woman bare to the waist stretching out as if she were swimming, and appearing to attempt to hold her box above the water.

Near the table, on an armchair of gilded wood picked out with red, with blue feet, and with lions for arms, covered with a thick cushion of purple stuff starred with gold and crossed with black, the end of which fell over the back, was seated a young woman, or rather, a young girl of marvellous beauty, in a graceful attitude of nonchalance and melancholy.

Her features, of ideal delicacy, were of the purest Egyptian type, and sculptors must have often thought of her as they carved the images of Isis and Hathor, even at the risk of breaking the rigorous hieratic laws. Golden and rosy reflections coloured her warm pallor, in which showed her long black eyes, made to appear larger by lines of antimony, and full of a languorous, inexpressible sadness. Those great dark eyes, with the eyebrows strongly marked and the eyelids coloured, gave a strange expression to the dainty, almost childish face. The half-parted lips, somewhat thick, of the colour of a pomegranate flower, showed a gleam of polished white and preserved the involuntary and almost painful smile which imparts so sympathetic a charm to the Egyptian face. The nose, slightly depressed at the root, where the eyebrows melted one into another in a velvety shadow,

rose in such pure lines, such delicate outlines, and with such well-cut nostrils that any woman or goddess would have been satisfied with it in spite of its slightly African profile. The chin was rounded with marvellous elegance and shone like polished ivory. The cheeks, rather rounder than those of the beauties of other nations, added to the face an expression of extreme sweetness and gracefulness.

This lovely girl wore for head-dress a sort of helmet formed of a Guinea fowl, the half-closed wings of which fell upon her temples, and the pretty, small head of which came down to the centre of her brow, while the tail, marked with white spots, spread out on the back of her neck. A clever combination of enamel imitated to perfection the plumage of the bird. Ostrich-feathers, planted in the helmet like an aigrette, completed this head-dress, which was reserved for young virgins, as the vulture, the symbol of maternity, is worn only by women. The hair of the young girl, of a brilliant black, plaited into tresses, hung in masses on either side of her smooth, round cheeks, and fell down to her shoulders. In the shadowy masses of the hair shone, like suns in a cloud, great discs of gold worn as earrings. From the head-dress hung grace-

fully down the back two long bands of stuff with fringed ends. A broad pectoral ornament, composed of several rows of enamels, gold and cornelian beads, and fishes and lizards of stamped gold, covered her breast from the lower part of the neck to the upper part of the bosom, which showed pink and white through the thin warp of the calasiris. The dress, of a large checkered pattern, was fastened under the bosom with a girdle with long ends, and ended in a broader border of transverse stripes edged with a fringe. Triple bracelets of lapis-lazuli beads, divided here and there by golden balls, encircled her slender wrists, delicate as those of a child; and her lovely, narrow feet with long, supple toes, were shod with sandals of white kid stamped with designs in gold, and rested on a cedar stool incrusted with red and green enamel.

Near Tahoser (for this was the name of the young Egyptian) knelt, one leg drawn back under the thigh and the other forming an obtuse angle, in the attitude which the painters love to reproduce on the walls of hypogea, a female harpist placed upon a sort of low pedestal, destined no doubt to increase the resonance of the instrument. A piece of stuff striped with coloured bands, the ends of which, thrown back, hung

in fluted lappets, bound her hair and framed in her face, smiling mysteriously like that of a sphinx. A narrow dress, or rather sheath, of transparent gauze outlined closely the youthful contours of her elegant, slender form. Her dress, cut below the breast, left her shoulders, chest, and arms free in their chaste nudity. A support, fixed to the pedestal on which was placed the player, and traversed by a bolt in the shape of a key, formed a rest for the harp, the weight of which, but for that, would have borne wholly upon the shoulders of the young woman. The harp, which ended in a sort of keyboard, rounded like a shell and covered with ornamental paintings, bore at its upper end a sculptured head of Hathor surmounted by an ostrich-plume. The nine cords were stretched diagonally and quivered under the long, slender hands of the harpist, who often, in order to reach the lower notes, bent with a sinuous motion as if she were about to float on the waves of music and accompany the vanishing harmony.

Behind her stood another musician, who might have been thought nude but for the faint white haze which toned the bronze colour of her body. She played on a sort of guitar with an exceedingly long handle, the

three cords of which were coquettishly adorned at their extremity with coloured tufts. One of her arms, slender yet round, grasped the top of the handle with a sculptural pose, while the other upheld the instrument and touched the strings.

A third young woman, whose enormous mass of hair made her look all the more slender, beat time upon a tympanum formed of a wooden frame slightly curved inward, on which was stretched an onager-skin.

The harpist sang a plaintive melody, accompanied in unison, inexpressibly sad. The words breathed vague aspirations, vague regrets, a hymn of love to the unknown, and timid plaints of the rigour of the gods and the cruelty of fate. Tahoser, leaning upon one of the lions of her armchair, her hand under her cheek and her finger curved against her temple, listened with inattention more apparent than real, to the song of the musician. At times a sigh made her breast heave and raised the enamels of her necklace. Sometimes a moist light caused by a growing tear shone in her eye between the lines of antimony, and her tiny teeth bit her lower lip as if she were fighting her own emotion.

"Satou," she said, clapping her delicate hands together to silence the musician, who at once deadened with her palm the vibrations of the harp, "your song enervates me, makes me languid, and would make me giddy like overpowerful perfumes. The strings of your harp seem to be twisted with the vibrations of my heart and sound painfully within my breast. You make me almost ashamed, for it is my soul that mourns in your music. Who can have told you my secrets?"

"Mistress," replied the harpist, "the poet and the musician know everything; the gods reveal hidden things to them; they express in their rhythm what the thought scarcely conceives and what the tongue confusedly stammers. But if my song saddens you, I can, by changing its mode, bring brighter ideas to your mind." And Satou struck the cords of her harp with joyous energy, and with a quick measure which the tympanum marked with more rapid strokes.

After this prelude she began a song praising the charms of wine, the intoxication of perfumes, and the delight of the dance. Some of the women, who, seated upon folding-stools formed of the necks of blue swans, whose yellow bills clasped the frame of the seat, or

kneeling upon scarlet cushions filled with the down of thistles, had assumed under the influence of Satou's music poses of utter languor, shivered; their nostrils swelled; they breathed in the magic rhythm; they rose to their feet, and, moved by an irresistible impulse, began to dance. A head-dress, in the shape of a helmet cut out around the ear, enclosed their hair, some locks of which escaped and fell upon their brown cheeks, which the ardour of the dance soon turned rosy. Broad golden circles beat upon their necks, and through their long gauze shifts, embroidered at the top with pearls, showed their golden bronze bodies which moved with the ease of an adder. They twisted, turned, swayed their hips, bound with a narrow black girdle, threw themselves back, bowed down, inclined their heads to right and left as if they found a secret voluptuousness in touching their polished chins with their cold, bare shoulders, swelled out their breasts like doves, knelt and rose, pressed their hands to their bosom or voluptuously outspread their arms, which seemed to flutter as the wings of Iris or Nephthys, dragged their limbs, bent the knee, displayed their swift feet with little staccato movements, and followed every undulation of the music. The maids, standing

against the wall to leave free space for the evolutions of the dancers, marked the rhythm by snapping their fingers or clapping their hands together. Some of these maids, absolutely nude, had no other raiment than a bracelet of enamelled ware; others wore a narrow cloth held by straps, and a few sprays of flowers twisted in their hair. It was a strange and graceful sight. The buds and the flowers, gently moving, shed their perfume through the hall, and these young women, thus wreathed, might have suggested fortunate comparisons to poets.

But Satou had overestimated the power of her art. The joyous rhythm seemed to increase Tahoser's melancholy. A tear rolled down her fair cheek like a drop of Nile water on a nymphœa, and hiding her face in the breast of her favourite maid, who leaned upon the armchair of her mistress, she uttered with a sob, dovelike in its sadness, "Oh, my dear Nofré, I am very sad and very unhappy!"

II

NOFRÉ, anticipating some confidence, made a sign, and the harpist, the two musicians, the dancers, and the maids silently withdrew one by one, like the figures painted on frescoes. When the last had gone, the favourite said to her mistress in a petting, sympathetic tone, like a young mother soothing her child's tender grief,—

"What is the matter, dear mistress, that you are sad and unhappy? Are you not young, so fair that the loveliest envy you, and free to do what you please? And did not your father, the high-priest Petamounoph, whose mummy rests concealed within a rich tomb,—did he not leave you great wealth to do with as you please? Your palace is splendid, your gardens vast and watered by transparent streams, your coffers of enamelled ware and sycamore wood are filled with necklaces, pectorals, neck-plates, anklets, finely wrought seal-rings. Your gowns, your calasiris, your head-dresses are greater in number than the days of the year. Hopi, the father of waters, regularly covers with his fertilising mud your domains, which a vulture flying at top speed could

scarce traverse from sunrise to sunrise. And yet your heart, instead of opening joyously like a lotus bud in the month of Hathor or of Choeak, closes and contracts painfully."

Tahoser answered Nofré: —

"Yes, indeed, the gods of the higher zones have treated me favourably. But what matter one's possessions if one lacks the one thing desired? An unsatisfied wish makes the rich as poor, in his gilded, brightly painted palace, in the midst of his heaps of grain, of perfumes and precious things, as the most wretched workman of the Memnonia, who sops up with sawdust the blood of the bodies, or the semi-nude negro driving on the Nile his frail papyrus-boat under the burning midday sun."

Nofré smiled, and said with a look of imperceptible raillery, —

"Is it possible, O mistress, that a single one of your fancies has not been fulfilled at once? If you want a jewel, you give the workman an ingot of pure gold, cornelians, lapis-lazuli, agates, and hematite, and he carries out the wished-for design. It is the same way with gowns, cars, perfumes, flowers, and musical instruments. From Philæ to Heliopolis your slaves seek

out for you what is most beautiful and most rare; and if Egypt does not hold what you want, caravans bring it to you from the ends of the world."

The lovely Tahoser shook her pretty head and seemed annoyed at her confidante's lack of intelligence.

"Forgive me, mistress," said Nofré, changing her tone as she understood that she had made a mistake. "I had forgotten that it will soon be four months since the Pharaoh left on his expedition to Upper Ethiopia, and that the handsome oëris (general), who never passed under the terrace without looking up and slowing his steps, accompanies His Majesty. How well he looked in his uniform, how handsome, young, and bold!"

Tahoser's rosy lips half parted, as if she were about to speak, but a faint, rosy flush spread over her cheeks, she bowed her head, and the words ready to issue forth did not unfold their sonorous wings.

The maid thought she had guessed right, and continued, —

"In that case, mistress, your grief will soon end, for this morning a breathless runner arrived, announcing the triumphal return of the king before sundown. Have you not already heard innumerable rumours

buzzing confusedly over the city, which is awakening from its midday torpor? List! The wheels of the cars sound upon the stone slabs of the streets, and already the people are hurrying in compact bodies to the river bank, to cross it and reach the parade ground. Throw off your languor and come also to see that wondrous spectacle. When one is sad, one ought to mingle with the crowd, for solitude feeds sombre thoughts. From his chariot Ahmosis will smile graciously upon you, and you will return happier to your palace."

"Ahmosis loves me, but I do not love him," answered Tahoser.

"You speak as a maid," replied Nofré, who was very much smitten with the handsome officer, and who thought that the disdainful nonchalance of Tahoser was assumed. In point of fact, Ahmosis was a very handsome fellow. His profile resembled that of the images of the gods carved by the most skilful sculptors. His proud, regular features equalled in beauty those of a woman; his slightly aquiline nose, his brilliant black eyes lengthened with antimony, his polished cheeks, smooth as Oriental alabaster, his well-shaped lips, his tall, handsome figure, his broad chest, his narrow hips,

his strong arms on which, however, no muscle stood out in coarse relief, were all that were needed to seduce the most difficult to please; but Tahoser did not love him, whatever Nofré might think. Another idea, which she refrained from expressing, for she did not believe Nofré capable of understanding her, helped the young girl to make up her mind. She threw off her languor, and rose from her armchair with a vivacity quite unexpected after the broken-down attitude she had preserved during the singing and the dancing.

Nofré, kneeling before her, fastened on her feet sandals with turned-up ends, cast scented powder on her hair, drew from a box several bracelets in the shape of serpents, and a few rings with sacred scarabæi for gems, put on her cheeks a green powder which immediately turned rose-colour as it touched the skin, polished her nails with a cosmetic, and adjusted the somewhat rumpled folds of her calasiris like a zealous maid who means that her mistress shall show to the greatest advantage. Then she called two or three servants, and ordered them to make ready the boat and transport to the other side of the river the chariot and oxen.

The palace, or if this name seems too pompous, the dwelling of Tahoser, rose close to the Nile, from which it was separated by gardens only. Petamounoph's daughter, her hand resting on Nofré's shoulder, and preceded by her servants, walked down to the water-gate through the arbour, the broad leaves of which, softening the rays of the sun, flecked with light shadows her lovely face. She soon reached the wide brick quay, on which swarmed a mighty multitude, awaiting the departure or return of the boats.

The vast city held now only the sick, the invalids, old people unable to move, and the slaves left in charge of the houses. Through the streets, the squares, the dromos (temple avenues), down the sphinx avenues, through the pylons, along the quays, flowed streams of human beings all bound for the Nile. The multitude exhibited the strangest variety. The Egyptians were there in largest numbers, and were recognisable by their clean profile, their tall, slender figures, their fine linen robes or their carefully pleated calasiris. Some, their heads enveloped in striped green or blue cloth, with narrow drawers closely fitting to their loins, showed to the belt their bare torsos the colour of baked clay. Against this mass of natives stood out divers members

of exotic races: negroes from the Upper Nile, as black as basalt gods, their arms bound round with broad ivory rings, their ears adorned with barbaric ornaments; bronzed Ethiopians, fierce-eyed, uneasy, and restless in the midst of this civilisation, like wild beasts in the glare of day; Asiatics with their pale-yellow complexion and their blue eyes, their beard curled in spirals, wearing a tiara fastened by a band, and draped in heavily embroidered, fringed robes; Pelasgi, dressed in wild beasts' skins fastened on the shoulder, showing their curiously tattooed legs and arms, wearing feathers in their hair, with two long love-locks hanging down. Through the multitude gravely marched shaven-headed priests with a panther's-skin twisted around their body in such a way that the head of the animal formed a sort of belt-buckle, byblos shoes on their feet, in their hand a tall acacia-stick on which were engraved hieroglyphic characters; soldiers, their silver-studded daggers by their side, their bucklers on their backs, their bronze axes in their hands; distinguished personages, their breasts adorned with neck-plates of honour, to whom the slaves bowed low, bringing their hands close to the ground; and sliding along the walls with humble and sad mien, poor, half-nude women travelling along

bowed under the weight of their children suspended from their neck in rags of stuff or baskets of espartero; while handsome girls, accompanied by three or four maids, passed proudly with their long, transparent dresses knotted under their breasts with long, floating scarfs, sparkling with enamels, pearls, and gold, and giving out a fragrance of flowers and aromatic essences.

Among the foot-passengers went litters borne by Ethiopians running rapidly and rhythmically; light carts drawn by spirited horses with plumed headgear; ox chariots moving slowly along and bearing a whole family. Scarcely did the crowd, careless of being run over, draw aside to make room, and often the drivers were forced to strike with their whips those who were slow or obstinate in moving away.

The greatest animation reigned on the river, which, notwithstanding its breadth, was so covered with boats of all kinds that the water was invisible along the whole stretch of the city; all manner of craft, from the bark with raised poop and prow and richly painted and gilded cabin to the light papyrus skiff, — everything had been called into use. Even the boats used to ferry cattle and to carry freight, and the reed rafts kept up

by skins, which generally carried loads of clay vessels, had not been disdained. The waters of the Nile, beaten, lashed, and cut by oars, sweeps, and rudders, foamed like the sea, and formed many an eddy that broke the force of the current.

The build of the boats was as varied as it was picturesque. Some were finished off at each end with a great lotus flower curving inwards, the stem adorned with fluttering flags; others were forked at the poop which rose to a point; others again were crescent-shaped, with horns at either end; others bore a sort of a castle or platform on which stood the pilots; still others were composed of three strips of bark bound with cords, and were driven by a paddle. The boats for the transport of animals and chariots were moored side by side, supporting a platform on which rested a floating bridge to facilitate embarking and disembarking. The number of these was very great. The horses, terrified, neighed and stamped with their sounding hoofs; the oxen turned restlessly towards the shore their shining noses whence hung filaments of saliva, but grew calmer under the caresses of their drivers. The boatswains marked time for the rowers by striking together the palms of their hands; the pilots, perched

on the poop or walking about on the raised cabins, shouted their orders, indicating the manœuvres necessary to make way through the moving labyrinth of vessels. Sometimes, in spite of all precautions, boats collided, and crews exchanged insults or struck at each other with their oars. These countless crafts, most of them painted white and adorned with ornaments of green, blue, or red, laden with men and women dressed in many-coloured costumes, caused the Nile to disappear entirely over an extent of many miles, and presented under the brilliant Egyptian sun a spectacle dazzling in its changefulness. The water, agitated in every direction, surged, sparkled, and gleamed like quicksilver, and resembled a sun shattered into millions of pieces.

Tahoser entered her barge, which was decorated with wondrous richness. In the centre stood a cabin, its entablature surmounted with a row of uræus-snakes, the angles squared to the shape of pillars, and the walls adorned with designs. A binnacle with pointed roof stood on the poop, and was matched at the other end by a sort of altar enriched with paintings. The rudder consisted of two huge sweeps, ending in heads of Hathor, that were fastened with long

strips of stuff and worked upon hollow posts. On the mast shivered — for the east wind had just risen — an oblong sail fastened to two yards, the rich stuff of which was embroidered and painted with lozenges, chevrons, birds, and chimerical animals in brilliant colours; from the lower yard hung a fringe of great tufts.

The moorings cast off and the sail braced to the wind, the vessel left the bank, sheering with its sharp prow between the innumerable boats, the oars of which became entangled and moved about like the legs of a scarabæus thrown over on its back. It sailed on carelessly amidst a stream of insults and shouts. Its greater power enabled it to disdain collisions which would have run down frailer vessels. Besides, Tahoser's crew were so skilful that their vessel seemed endowed with life, so swiftly did it obey the rudder and avoid in the nick of time serious obstacles. Soon it had left behind the heavily laden boats with their cabins filled with passengers inside, and on the roof three or four rows of men, women, and children crouching in the attitude so dear to the Egyptian people. These individuals, so kneeling, might have been mistaken for the assistant judges of Osiris, had

not their faces, instead of bearing the expression of meditation suited to funeral councillors, expressed the most unmistakable delight. The fact was that the Pharaoh was returning victorious, bringing vast booty with him. Thebes was given up to joy, and its whole population was proceeding to welcome the favourite of Ammon Ra, Lord of the Diadem, the Emperor of the Pure Region, the mighty Aroëris, the Sun God and the Subduer of Nations.

Tahoser's barge soon reached the opposite bank. The boat bearing her car came alongside almost at the same moment. The oxen ascended the flying bridge, and in a few minutes were yoked by the alert servants who had been landed with them.

The oxen were white spotted with black, and bore on their heads a sort of tiara which partly covered the yoke; the latter was fastened by broad leather straps, one of which passed around the neck of the oxen, and the other, fastened to the first, passed under their belly. Their high withers, their broad dewlaps, their clean limbs, their small hoofs, shining like agate, their tails with the tuft carefully combed, showed that they were thorough-bred and that hard field-work had never deformed them. They exhibited the majestic placidity

of Apis, the sacred bull, when it receives homage and offerings.

The chariot, extremely light, could hold two or three persons standing. The semicircular body, covered with ornaments and gilding arranged in graceful curved lines, was supported by a sort of diagonal stay, which rose somewhat beyond the upper edge and to which the traveller clung with his hand when the road was rough or the speed of the oxen rapid. On the axle, placed at the back of the body in order to diminish the jolting, were two six-spoked wheels held by keyed bolts. On top of a staff planted at the back of the vehicle spread a parasol in the shape of palm leaves.

Nofré, bending over the edge of the chariot, held the reins of the oxen, bridled like horses, and drove the car in the Egyptian fashion, while Tahoser, motionless by her side, leaned a hand, studded with rings from the little finger to the thumb, on the gilded moulding of the shell. These two lovely maidens, the one brilliant with enamels and precious stones, the other scarcely veiled in a transparent tunic of gauze, formed a charming group on the brilliantly painted car. Eight or ten men-servants, dressed in tunics

with transverse stripes, the folds of which were massed in front, accompanied the equipage, keeping step with the oxen.

On this side of the river the crowd was not less great. The inhabitants of the Memnonia quarters and of the neighbouring villages were arriving in their turn, and every moment the boats, landing their passengers on the brick quay wall, brought additional sight-seers to swell the multitude. The wheels of innumerable chariots, all driving towards the parade ground, flashed like suns in the golden dust which they raised. Thebes at that moment must have been as deserted as if a conqueror had carried away its people into captivity.

The frame, too, was worthy of the picture. In the midst of green fields whence rose the aigrettes of the dôm palms, showed in bright colours houses of pleasaunce, palaces, and summer homes surrounded by sycamores and mimosas. Pools of water sparkled in the sunshine, the festoons of vines climbed on the arched arbours, and in the background stood out the gigantic pylons of the palace of Rameses Meïamoun, with its huge pylons, its enormous walls, its gilded and painted flagstaffs from which the colours blew out in the wind;

and further to the north the two colossi sitting in postures of eternal immobility, mountains of granite in human shape, before the entrance to the Amenophium, showed through a bluish haze, half masking the still more distant Rhamesseium, and beyond it the tomb of the high-priest, but allowing the palace of Menephta to be seen at one of its angles.

Nearer the Lybian chain, from the Memnonian quarter inhabited by the undertakers, dissectors, and embalmers, went up into the blue air the red smoke of the natron boilers, for the work of death never ceased; in vain did life spread tumultuously around, the bandages were being prepared, the cases moulded, the coffins carved with hieroglyphs, and some cold body was stretched out upon the funeral bed, with feet of lion or jackal, waiting to have its toilet made for eternity.

On the horizon, but, owing to the transparency of the air, seeming to be much nearer, the Libyan mountains showed against the clear sky their limestone crests and their barren slopes hollowed out into hypogea and passages.

Looking towards the other bank the prospect was no less wondrous. Against the vaporous background of

the Arabian chain, the gigantic pile of the Northern Palace, which distance itself could scarce diminish, reared above the flat-roofed dwellings its mountains of granite, its forest of giant pillars, rose-coloured in the rays of the sunshine. In front of the palace stretched a vast esplanade reaching down to the river by a staircase placed at the angles; in the centre an avenue of ram-headed sphinxes perpendicular to the Nile, led to a huge pylon, in front of which stood two colossal statues and a pair of obelisks, the pyramidions of which, rising above the cornice, showed their flesh-coloured points against the uniform blue of the sky. Beyond and above the boundary wall rose the side façade of the temple of Ammon. More to the right were the temples of Khons and Oph. A giant pylon, seen in profile and facing to the south, and two obelisks sixty cubits in height, marked the beginning of that marvellous avenue of two thousand sphinxes with lions' bodies and rams' heads, which reached from the Northern Palace to the Southern Palace. On the pedestals could be seen swelling the huge quarters of the first row of these monsters, that turned their backs to the Nile. Farther still, there showed faintly in the rosy light

cornices on which the mystic globe outspread its vast wings, heads of placid-faced colossi, corners of mighty buildings, needles of granite, terraces rising above terraces, columns of palm trees growing like tufts of grass amid these vast constructions; and the Palace of the South uprose, with high painted walls, flag-adorned staffs, sloping doors, obelisks, and herds of sphinxes. Beyond, as far as the eye could reach, Oph stretched out with its palaces, its priests' colleges, its houses, and in the dimmest distance the crests of its walls and the summits of its gates showed as faint blue lines.

Tahoser gazed upon the prospect which was so familiar to her, but her glance expressed no admiration; however, as she passed a house almost buried amid luxuriant vegetation, she lost her apathy, and seemed to seek on the terraces and on the outer gallery some well-known form.

A handsome young man, carelessly leaning against one of the slender pillars of the building, appeared to be watching the crowd, but his dark eyes, with their dreamy look, did not rest on the chariot which bore Tahoser and Nofré.

Meanwhile the hand of the daughter of Petamou-

noph clung nervously to the edge of the car; her cheeks turned pale under the light touch of rouge which Nofré had put on, and as if she felt herself fainting, she breathed in rapidly and often the scent of her nosegay of lotus.

III

IN spite of her usual perspicacity, Nofré had not noticed the effect produced on her mistress by the sight of the careless stranger. She had observed neither her pallor, followed by a deep blush, nor the brighter gleam of her glance nor the rustling of the enamels and pearls of her necklace rising and falling with her bosom. It is true that her whole attention was given to the management of the equipage, which presented a good deal of difficulty in view of the ever denser masses of sight-seers crowding to be present at the triumphal entrance of the Pharaoh.

At last the car reached the parade ground, a vast enclosure carefully levelled for military displays. Great banks, which must have cost thirty enslaved nations the labour of years, formed a bold framework for the immense parallelogram. Sloping revetment walls of unbaked bricks covered the banks, and the crests were lined many files deep by hundreds of thousands of Egyptians, whose white or brightly striped costumes fluttered in the sun with that constant motion character-

istic of a multitude even when it seems to be motionless. Behind this ring of spectators the cars, chariots, and litters watched by the coachmen, drivers, and slaves, seemed to be the camp of a migrating nation, so great was their number; for Thebes, the wonder of the ancient world, reckoned more inhabitants than do certain kingdoms. The fine, smooth sand of the vast arena lined with a million people, sparkled under the light, falling from a sky as blue as the enamel of the Osiris statuettes.

On the southern side of the parade ground the revetment wall was cut through by a road which ran towards Upper Egypt along the foot of the Libyan chain. At the opposite corner the revetment was again cut so that the road was prolonged to the palace of Rameses Meïamoun through the thick brick walls. Petamounoph's daughter and Nofré, for whom the servants had made room, stood on this corner on the top of the wall, so that they could see the whole procession pass at their feet.

A mighty rumour, low, deep, and powerful, like that of an advancing ocean, was heard in the distance and drowned the innumerable noises arising from the crowd, as the roar of a lion silences the yelping of

a tribe of jackals. Soon the separate sounds of the instruments were heard amidst the thunderous noise produced by the driving of war chariots and the rhythmic marching of the soldiers. A sort of reddish mist like that raised by the desert wind filled the sky in that direction, and yet there was no breeze, — not a breath of air, — and the most delicate branches of the palms were as motionless as if they had been carved on granite capitals. Not a hair moved on the wet temples of the women, and the fluted lappets of their head-dresses fell limp behind their backs. The dusty mist was produced by the army on the march, and hovered above it like a dun-coloured cloud.

The roar increased, the cloud of dust opened, and the first files of musicians debouched into the vast arena, to the intense delight of the multitude, which, notwithstanding its respect for the majesty of the Pharaoh, was beginning to weary of waiting under a sunshine which would have melted any but Egyptian skulls.

The advance guard of musicians stopped for a few moments. Delegations of priests and deputations of the chief inhabitants of Thebes crossed the parade

ground to meet the Pharaoh, and drew up in double line in attitudes of the deepest respect so as to leave a free passage for the procession.

The music, which alone might have formed a small army, was composed of drums, tambourines, trumpets, and sistra. The first squad passed, blowing a sounding blare of triumph through its short copper bugles that shone like gold. Every one of these musicians carried a second bugle under his arm, as if the instrument were likely to be worn out before the man. The costume of the trumpeters consisted of a short tunic bound by a sash the broad ends of which fell in front. A narrow band upholding two ostrich-plumes fastened their thick hair. The plumes thus placed looked like the antennæ of a scarabæus, and imparted to those who wore them a quaint, insect-like appearance.

The drummers, clad in a mere pleated kilt and bare to the belt, struck with sycamore sticks the wild-ass-skin stretched over their kettledrums suspended from a leather baldric, keeping the time which the drum major marked by clapping his hands as he frequently turned towards them. Next to the drummers came the sistrum players, who shook their instruments with

sharp, quick movements, and at regular intervals made the metal rings sound upon the four bronze bars. The tambourine players carried transversely before them their oblong instrument fastened by a scarf passed behind their neck, and struck with both fists the skin stretched on either end.

Each band numbered not less than two hundred men, but the storm of sound produced by the bugles, drums, sistra, and tambourines, which would have been deafening within the palace, was in no wise too loud or too tremendous under the vast cupola of the heavens, in the centre of that immense space, amid buzzing multitudes, at the head of an army which baffles enumeration and which was advancing with the roar of great waters. Besides, were eight hundred musicians too many to precede the Pharaoh, beloved of Ammon Ra, represented by colossi of basalt and granite sixty cubits high, whose name was written on the cartouches of imperishable monuments, and whose story was carved and painted upon the walls of the hypostyle halls, on the sides of pillars, in endless *bassi-relievi* and innumerable frescoes? Was it too much indeed for a king who dragged a hundred conquered nations by their hair, and from the height of

his throne ruled the nations with his whip? For the living Sun that flamed on dazzled eyes? For one who, save that he did not possess eternal life, was a god?

Behind the music came the captive barbarians, strange to look at, with bestial faces, black skins, woolly hair, as much like monkeys as men, and dressed in the costume of their country, — a skirt just above the hips held by a single brace, embroidered with ornaments in divers colours. An ingenious cruelty had directed the binding together of the prisoners. Some were bound by the elbows behind the back; others by their hands raised above their head, in the most uncomfortable position; others again had their wrists caught in stocks; others with their neck in an iron collar or held by a rope which fastened a whole file of them, with a loop for each victim. It seemed as if the object sought had been to thwart as much as possible natural attitudes in the fettering of these poor wretches, who marched before their conqueror awkwardly and with difficulty, rolling their big eyes and twisting and writhing in pain. Guards marched at their side, striking them with sticks to make them keep time.

Next came, bowed with shame, exposed in their wretched, deformed nudity, dark-complexioned women, with long hanging tresses, carrying their children in a piece of stuff fastened around their brow, — a vile herd intended for the meanest uses. Others, young, handsome and fairer, their arms adorned with broad bracelets of ivory, their ears pulled down by great metal discs, wrapped themselves in long, wide-sleeved tunics embroidered around the neck and falling in fine, close folds down to their ankles, on which rattled anklets, — poor girls, snatched from their country, their parents, their lovers perhaps; yet they smiled through their tears, for the power of beauty is boundless, strangeness gives birth to caprice, and perhaps the royal favour awaited some of these barbaric captives in the secret depths of the harem. Soldiers accompanied them and kept the multitude from crowding upon them.

The standard-bearers followed, bearing on high the golden staff of their ensigns, which represented mystic baris, sacred hawks, heads of Hathor surmounted by ostrich-plumes, winged ibex, cartouches bearing the king's name, crocodiles, and other warlike or religious symbols. Long white streamers spotted with black

spots were tied to these standards, and fluttered gracefully on the march.

At the sight of the standards which announced the arrival of the Pharaoh, the deputations of priests and notables stretched out their hands in supplication towards him, or let them fall on their knees, the palms turned up. Some even prostrated themselves, their knees close to the body, their faces in the dust, in an attitude of absolute submission and deep adoration, while the spectators waved great palm-branches.

A herald or reader, holding in his hand a roll covered with hieroglyphic signs, marched along between the standard-bearers and the incense-burners, who preceded the king's litter. He shouted, in a loud voice as sonorous as a brazen trumpet, the victories of the Pharaoh; he related the fortunes of the Pharaoh's battles, announced the number of captives and of war chariots taken from the enemy, the amount of the booty, the measures of gold-dust, the elephants' tusks, the ostrich-plumes, the quantities of balsamic gum, the giraffes, lions, panthers, and other rare animals. He named the barbaric chiefs who had been slain by the javelins of His Majesty the Almighty Aroëris, favourite of the gods. At each

proclamation the people uttered a mighty shout, and from the top of the revetment banks threw down upon the conqueror's pathway long, green palm-branches.

At last the Pharaoh appeared. Priests, who turned and faced him at regular intervals, swung their censers, after having cast incense upon the coals lighted in a little bronze cup which was held by a hand at the end of a sort of sceptre topped by a sacred animal's head. They marched respectfully backwards while the scented blue smoke rose to the nostrils of the triumphant sovereign, apparently as indifferent to these honours as if he were a god of bronze or basalt.

Twelve oëris, or military chiefs, their heads covered with a light helmet surmounted by an ostrich-plume, bare to the belt, their loins wrapped in a loin cloth of stiff folds, wearing their buckler hanging from their belt, supported a sort of dais on which rested the throne of the Pharaoh. This was a chair with feet and arms formed of lions, with a high back provided with a cushion that fell over it, and adorned on its sides with a network of rose and blue flowers. The feet, the arms, and the edges of the throne were gilded, while brilliant colours filled the places left

empty. On either side of the litter four fan-bearers waved huge feather fans, semicircular in form, carried at the end of long, gilded handles. Two priests bore a huge cornucopia richly ornamented, whence fell quantities of giant lotus-flowers.

The Pharaoh wore a helmet shaped like a mitre and cut out around the ears, where it fell over the neck by way of a protection. On the blue ground of the helmet sparkled innumerable dots like birds' eyes, formed of three circles, black, white, and red. It was adorned with scarlet and yellow lines, and the symbolic uræus snake, twisting its golden scales on the fore part, rose and swelled above the royal brow. Two long, purple, fluted lappets fell upon his shoulders and completed this majestic head-dress.

A broad necklace, of seven rows of enamels, gems, and golden beads, swelled on the Pharaoh's breast and shone in the sun. His upper garment was a sort of close-fitting jacket, of rose and black checkers, the ends of which, shaped like narrow bands, were twisted tightly several times around the bust. The sleeves, which came down to the biceps and were edged with transverse lines of gold, red, and blue, showed round, firm arms, the left provided with a broad wristlet of

metal intended to protect it from the switch of the cord when the Pharaoh shot an arrow from his triangular bow. His right arm was adorned with a bracelet formed of a serpent twisted several times on itself, and in his hand he held a long golden sceptre ending in a lotus-bud. The rest of the body was enveloped in the finest linen cloth with innumerable folds, held to the hips by a girdle inlaid with plates of enamel and gold. Between the jacket and the belt, the torso showed, shining and polished like rose granite worked by a skilful workman. Sandals with pointed upturned toes protected his long narrow feet, which were held close to one another like the feet of the gods on the walls of the temples. His smooth, beardless face with its great, regular features, which it seemed impossible for any human emotion to alter, and which the blood of vulgar life did not colour, with its deathlike pallor, its closed lips, its great eyes made larger still by black lines, the eyelids of which never closed any more than did those of the sacred hawk, — inspired through its very immobility respect and awe. It seemed as though those fixed eyes gazed upon eternity and the infinite only; surrounding objects did not appear to be reflected in them. The satiety of enjoy-

ment, of will satisfied the moment it was expressed, the isolation of a demigod who has no fellow among mortals, the disgust of worship, and the weariness of triumph had forever marked that face, implacably sweet and of granite-like serenity. Not even Osiris judging the souls of the dead could look more majestic and more calm. A great tame lion, lying by his side upon the litter, stretched out its enormous paws like a sphinx upon a pedestal, and winked its yellow eyes. A rope fixed to the litter, fastened to the Pharaoh the chariots of the conquered chiefs. He dragged them behind him like animals in a leash. These vanquished chiefs, in gloomy, fierce attitudes, whose elbows, drawn together by their points, formed an ugly angle, staggered awkwardly as they were dragged by the cars driven by Egyptian coachmen.

Next came the war chariots of the young princes of the royal family, drawn by pairs of thorough-bred horses of noble and elegant shape, with slender legs and muscular quarters, their manes cut close and short, shaking their heads adorned with red plumes, frontlets, and headgear of metal bosses. A curved pole, adorned with scarlet squares, pressed down on their withers, and supported two small saddles surmounted with balls

of polished brass held together by a light yoke, with curved ends. Girths and breast-harnesses richly embroidered, and superb housings rayed with blue or red and fringed with tufts, completed their strong, graceful, and light harness.

The body of the car, painted red and green, and ornamented with plates and bosses of bronze like the boss on the bucklers, had on either side two great quivers placed diagonally in opposite directions, the one containing javelins, and the other arrows. On either side a carved and gilded lion, its face wrinkled with a dreadful grin, seemed to roar, and to be about to spring at the foe.

The young princes wore for a head-dress a narrow band which bound their hair and in which twisted, as it swelled its hood, the royal asp. For dress they wore a tunic embroidered around the neck and the sleeves with brilliant embroidery and bound at the waist with a leather belt fastened with a metal plate on which were engraved hieroglyphs. Through the belt was passed a long, triangular, brazen-bladed poniard, the handle of which, fluted transversely, ended in a hawk's-head. On the car, by the side of each prince, stood the driver, whose business it was to

drive during the battle, and the equerry charged with warding off with a buckler the blows directed at the fighter, while he himself shot his arrows or hurled the javelins which he took from the quivers at the sides.

Behind the princes came the chariots which formed the Egyptian cavalry, to the number of twenty thousand, each drawn by two horses and carrying three men. These chariots came ten abreast, with wheels almost touching yet never meeting, so skilful were the drivers. Some lighter cars, intended for skirmishes and reconnaissances came foremost, bearing a single warrior, who in order to have his hands free while fighting, passed the reins around his body. By leaning to the right, to the left or backwards, he directed and stopped his horses, and it was truly marvellous to see these noble animals, which seemed left to themselves, guided by imperceptible movements and preserving an unchangingly regular gait.

On one of these chariots the elegant Ahmosis, Nofré's protégé, showed his tall figure and cast his glance over the multitude, trying to make out Tahoser.

The trampling of the horses held in with difficulty, the thunder of the bronze-bound wheels, the metallic

justling of weapons, imparted to the procession an imposing and formidable character well calculated to strike terror into the bravest souls. Helmets, plumes, corselets covered with green, red, and yellow scales, gilded bows, brazen swords, flashed and gleamed fiercely in the sun shining in the heavens above the Libyan chain like a great Osiris eye, and one felt that the charge of such an army must necessarily sweep the nations before it even as the storm drives the light straw. Under these numberless wheels the earth resounded and trembled as if in the throes of an earthquake.

Next to the chariots came the infantry battalions marching in order, the men carrying their shields on the left arm, and a lance, a javelin, a bow, a sling, or an axe in the right hand. The soldiers wore helmets adorned with two horse-hair tails. Their bodies were protected by a cuirass of crocodile-skin; their impassible look, the perfect regularity of their motions, their coppery complexion, deepened still more by the recent expedition to the burning regions of Upper Egypt, the desert dust which lay upon their clothes, inspired admiration for their discipline and courage. With such soldiers Egypt could conquer the world.

Then came the troops of the allies, easily known by the barbarous shape of their helmets, like mitres cut off, or else surmounted with a crescent stuck on a point. Their broad-bladed swords, their saw-edged axes, must have inflicted incurable wounds.

Slaves carried the booty announced by the herald on their shoulders or on stretchers, and belluaria led panthers, wild-cats, crawling as if they sought to hide themselves, ostriches flapping their wings, giraffes overtopping the crowd with their long necks, and even brown bears taken, it was said, in the Mountains of the Moon.

The King had long since entered his palace, yet the defile was still proceeding. As he passed the revetment on which stood Tahoser and Nofré, the Pharaoh, whose litter, borne upon the shoulders of oëris, placed him above the crowd on a level with the young girl, had slowly fixed upon her his dark glance. He had not turned his head, not a muscle of his face had moved, and his features had remained as motionless as the golden mask of a mummy, yet his eyes had turned between his painted eyelids towards Tahoser, and a flash of desire had lighted up their sombre discs, an effect as terrific as if the granite eyes of a divine simulacrum, suddenly

lighted up, were to express a human thought. He had half raised one of his hands from the arm of his throne, a gesture imperceptible to every one, but which one of the servants marching near the litter noticed, and at once looked towards the daughter of Petamounoph.

Meanwhile night had suddenly fallen, for there is no twilight in Egypt, — night, or rather a blue day, treading close upon the yellow day. In the azure of infinite transparency gleamed unnumbered stars, their twinkling light reflected confusedly in the waters of the Nile, which was stirred by the boats that brought back to the other shore the population of Thebes; and the last cohorts of the army were still tramping across the plain, like a gigantic serpent, when the barge landed Tahoser at the gate of her palace.

IV

THE Pharaoh reached his palace, situated a short distance from the parade ground on the left bank of the Nile. In the bluish transparency of the night the mighty edifice loomed more colossal still, and its huge outlines stood out with terrifying and sombre vigour against the purple background of the Libyan chain. The feeling of absolute power was conveyed by that mighty, immovable mass, upon which eternity itself could make no more impression than a drop of water on marble. A vast court surrounded by thick walls, adorned at their summits with deeply cut mouldings, lay in front of the palace. At the end of the court rose two high columns with palm-leaf capitals, marking the entrance to a second court. Behind these columns rose a giant pylon, consisting of two huge masses enclosing a monumental gate, intended rather for colossi of granite than for mere flesh and blood. Beyond these propylæa, and filling the end of a third court, the palace proper appeared in its formidable majesty. Two buildings projected squarely forward, like the bastions of a fortress, exhibit-

ing on their faces low *bassi-relievi* of vast size, which represented, in the consecrated manner, the victorious Pharaoh scourging his enemies and trampling them under foot; immense pages of history carved with a chisel on colossal stone books which the most distant posterity was yet to read. These buildings rose much higher than the pylons. The cornices, curving outwards and topped with great stones so arranged as to form battlements, showed superbly against the crest of the Libyan Mountains, which formed the background of the picture.

The façade of the palace connected these buildings and filled up the whole of the intervening space. Above its giant gateway, flanked with sphinxes, showed three rows of square windows, through which streamed the light from the interior and which formed upon the dark wall a sort of luminous checker-board. From the first story projected balconies, supported by statues of crouching prisoners.

The officers of the king's household, the eunuchs, the servants, and the slaves, informed of the approach of His Majesty by the blare of the trumpets and the roll of the drums, had proceeded to meet him, and waited, kneeling and prostrate, in the court paved with great

stone slabs. Captives, of the despised race of Scheto, bore urns filled with salt and olive oil, in which was dipped a wick, the flame of which crackled bright and clear. These men stood ranged in line from the basalt gate to the entrance of the first court, motionless like bronze lamp-bearers.

Soon the head of the procession entered the pylon and the bugles and the drums sounded with a din which, repeated by the echoes, drove the sleeping ibises from the entablatures. The bearers stopped at the gate in the façade between the two pavilions; slaves brought a footstool with several steps and placed it by the side of the litter. The Pharaoh rose with majestic slowness and stood for a few moments perfectly motionless. Thus standing on a pedestal of shoulders, he soared above all heads and appeared to be twelve cubits high. Strangely lighted, half by the rising moon, half by the light of the lamps, in a costume in which gold and enamels sparkled intermittently, he resembled Osiris, or Typhon rather. He descended the steps as if he were a statue, and at last entered the palace.

A first inner court, framed in by a row of huge pillars covered with hieroglyphs, that bore a frieze

ending in volutes, was slowly crossed by the Pharaoh in the midst of a crowd of prostrate slaves and maids.

Then appeared another court surrounded by a covered cloister, and short columns, the capitals of which were formed of a cube of hard sandstone, on which rested the massive architrave. The imprint of indestructibility marked the straight lines and the geometric forms of this architecture built with pieces of mountains. The pillars and the columns seemed to strike firmly into the ground in order to upbear the weight of the mighty stones placed on the cubes of their capitals, the walls to slope inwards so as to have a firmer foundation, and the stones to join together so as to form but one block; but polychromous decorations and *bassi-relievi* hollowed out and enriched with more brilliant tints added, in the daytime, lightness and richness to these vast masses, which when night had fallen, recovered all their imposing effect.

Under the cornice, in the Egyptian style, the unchanging lines of which formed against the sky a vast parallelogram of deep azure, quivered, in the intermittent breath of the breeze, lighted lamps placed at short distances apart. The fish-pond in the centre of the

court mingled, as it reflected them, their red flashes with the blue gleams of the moon. Rows of shrubs planted around the basin gave out a faint, sweet perfume. At the back opened the gate of the harem and of the private apartments, which were decorated with peculiar magnificence.

Below the ceiling ran a frieze of uræus snakes, standing on their tails and swelling their hoods. On the entablature of the door, in the hollow of the cornice, the mystic globe outspread its vast, imbricated wings; pillars ranged in symmetrical lines supported heavy sandstone blocks forming soffits, the blue ground of which was studded with golden stars. On the walls vast pictures, carved in low, flat relief and coloured with the most brilliant tints, represented the usual scenes of the harem and of home life. The Pharaoh was seen on his throne, gravely playing at draughts with one of his women who stood nude before him, her head bound with a broad band from which rose a mass of lotus flowers. In another the Pharaoh, without parting with any of his sovereign and sacerdotal impassibility, stretched out his hand and touched the chin of a young maid dressed in a collar and bracelet, who held out to him a bouquet of flowers. Elsewhere he was seen

undecided and smiling, as if he had slyly put off making a choice, in the midst of the young queens, who strove to overcome his gravity by all sorts of caressing and graceful coquetries.

Other panels represented female musicians and dancers, women bathing, flooded with perfumes and massaged by slaves, — the poses so elegant, the forms so youthfully suave, and the outlines so pure, that no art has ever surpassed them.

Rich and complicated ornamental designs, admirably carried out in harmonious green, blue, red, yellow, and white, covered the spaces left empty. On cartouches and bands in the shape of stelæ were inscribed the titles of the Pharaoh and inscriptions in his honour.

On the shafts of the huge columns were decorative or symbolical figures wearing the pschent, armed with the tau, following each other in procession, and whose eyes, showing full upon a side face, seemed to look inquisitively into the hall. Lines of perpendicular hieroglyphs separated the zones of personages. Among the green leaves carved on the drum of the capital, buds and lotus flowers stood out in their natural colours, imitating baskets of bloom.

Between each pair of columns an elegant table of cedar bore on its platform a bronze cup filled with scented oil, from which the cotton wicks drew an odoriferous light. Groups of tall vases, bound together with wreaths, alternated with the lamps and held at the foot of each pillar sheaves of golden grain mingled with field grasses and balsamic plants.

In the centre of the hall a round porphyry table, the disc of which was supported by the statue of a captive, disappeared under heaped-up urns, vases, flagons, and pots, whence rose a forest of gigantic artificial flowers; for real flowers would have appeared mean in the centre of that vast hall, and nature had to be proportioned to the mighty work of man. These enormous calyxes were of the most brilliant golden yellow, azure, and purple.

At the back rose the throne, or chair, of the Pharaoh, the feet of which, curiously crossed and bound by encircling ribbing, had in their re-entering angles four statuettes of barbaric Asiatic or African prisoners recognisable by their beards and their dress. These figures, their elbows tied behind their backs, and kneeling in constrained attitudes, their bodies bowed, bore upon their humbled heads the cushion, checkered with

gold, red, and black, on which sat their conqueror. Faces of chimerical animals from whose mouths fell, instead of a tongue, a long red tuft, adorned the cross-bars of the throne.

On either side of it were ranged, for the princes, less splendid, though still extremely elegant and charmingly fanciful chairs; for the Egyptians are no less clever at carving cedar, cypress, and sycamore wood, in gilding, colouring, and inlaying it with enamels, than in cutting in the Philoe or Syêné quarries monstrous granite blocks for the palaces of the Pharaohs and the sanctuaries of the gods.

The King crossed the hall with a slow, majestic step, without his painted eyelids having once moved; nothing indicated that he heard the cries of love that welcomed him, or that he perceived the human beings kneeling or prostrate, whose brows were touched by the folds of the calasiris that fell around his feet. He sat down, placing his ankles close together and his hands on his knees in the solemn attitude of the gods.

The young princes, handsome as women, took their seats to the right and left of their father. The servants took off their enamelled necklaces, their belts, and their swords, poured flagons of scent upon their

hair, rubbed their arms with aromatic oils, and presented them with wreaths of flowers, cool, perfumed collars, odorous luxuries better suited to the festival than the heavy richness of gold, of precious stones and pearls, which, for the matter of that, harmonise admirably with flowers.

Lovely nude slaves, whose slender forms showed the graceful transition from childhood to youth, their hips circled with a narrow belt that concealed none of their charms, lotus flowers in their hair, flagons of wavy alabaster in their hands, timidly pressed around the Pharaoh and poured palm oil over his shoulders, his arms, and his torso, polished like jasper. Other maids waved around his head broad fans of painted ostrich-feathers on long ivory or sandal-wood handles, that, as they were warmed by their small hands, gave forth a delightful odour. Others placed before the Pharaoh stalks of nymphœa that bloomed like the cup of the censers. All these attentions were rendered with a deep devotion, and a sort of respectful awe, as if to a divine, immortal personage, called down by pity from the superior zones to the vile tribe of men; for the king is the Son of the gods, the favoured of Phré, the protégé of Ammon Ra.

The women of the harem had risen from their prostrate attitude, and seated themselves on superb, carved and gilded chairs, with red-leather cushions filled with thistle-down. Thus ranged, they formed a line of graceful, smiling heads which a painter would have loved to reproduce. Some were dressed in tunics of white gauze with stripes alternately opaque and transparent, the narrow sleeves of which left bare the delicate, round arms covered with bracelets from the wrist to the elbow: others, bare to the waist, wore a skirt of pale lilac rayed with darker stripes, and covered with a fillet of little rose beads which showed in the diaper the cartouche of the Pharaoh traced on the stuff; others wore red skirts with black-pearl fillets; others again, draped in a tissue as light as woven air, as transparent as glass, wound the folds around them, and managed to show off coquettishly the shape of their lovely bosoms; others were enclosed in a sheath covered with blue, green, or red scales which moulded their forms accurately; and others again had their shoulders covered with a sort of pleated cape, and their fringed skirts were fastened below the breast with a scarf with long, floating ends.

The head-dresses were no less varied. Sometimes

the plaited hair was spun out into curls; sometimes it was divided into three parts, one of which fell down the back and the other two on either side of the cheeks. Huge periwigs, closely curled, with numberless cords maintained transversely by golden threads, rows of enamels, or pearls, were put on like helmets over young and lovely faces, which sought of art an aid which their beauty did not need.

All these women held in their hands a flower of the blue or white lotus, and breathed amorously, with a fluttering of their nostrils, the penetrating odour which the broad calyx exhaled. A stalk of the same flower, springing from the back of their necks, bowed over their heads and showed its bud between their eyebrows darkened with antimony.

In front of them black or white slaves, with no other garment than a waist girdle, held out to them necklaces of flowers made of crocuses, the blooms of which, white outside, are yellow inside, purple safflowers, golden-yellow chrysanthemums, red-berried nightshade, myosotis whose flowers seemed made of blue enamel of the statues of Isis, and nepenthes whose intoxicating odour makes one forget everything, even the far-distant home.

These slaves were followed by others, who on the upturned palm of their right hands bore cups of silver or bronze full of wine, and in the left held napkins with which the guests wiped their lips.

The wines were drawn from amphoræ of clay, glass, or metal held in elegant woven baskets placed on four-footed pedestals made of a light, supple wood interlaced in ingenious fashion. The baskets contained seven sorts of wines: date wine, palm wine, and wine of the grape, white, red, and green wines, new wine, Phoenician and Greek wines, and white Mareotis wine with a bouquet of violets.

The Pharaoh also took a cup from the hands of his cup-bearer standing near his throne, and put to his royal lips the strengthening drink.

Then sounded the harps, the lyres, the double flutes, the lutes, accompanying a song of triumph which choristers, ranged opposite the throne, one knee on the ground, accentuated as they beat time with the palms of their hands.

The repast began. The dishes, brought by Ethiopians from the vast kitchens of the palace, where a thousand slaves were busy preparing the feast in a fiery atmosphere, were placed on tables close by the

guests. The dishes, of scented wood admirably carved, of bronze, of earthenware or porcelain enamelled in brilliant colours, held large pieces of beef, antelope legs, trussed geese, siluras from the Nile, dough drawn out into long tubes and rolled, cakes of sesamum and honey, green watermelons with rosy meat, pomegranates full of rubies, grapes the colour of amber or of amethyst. Wreaths of papyrus crowned these dishes with their green foliage. The cups were also wreathed in flowers, and in the centre of the table, amid a vast heap of golden-coloured bread stamped with designs and marked with hieroglyphs, rose a tall vase whence emerged, spraying as it fell, a vast sheaf of persolutas, myrtles, pomegranates, convolvulus, chrysanthemums, heliotropes, scriphiums, and periplocas, a mingling of colours and of scents. Under the tables, around the supporting pillar, were arranged pots of lotus. Flowers, flowers everywhere, even under the seats of the guests! The women wore them on their arms, round their necks, on their heads in the shape of bracelets, necklaces, and crowns; the lamps burned amid huge bouquets, the dishes disappeared under leaves, the wines sparkled amid violets and roses.

It was a most characteristic, gigantic debauch of flowers, a colossal orgy of scents, unknown to other nations.

Slaves constantly brought from the gardens, which they plundered without diminishing their wealth, armfuls of rose laurel, of pomegranate, of lotus, to renew the flowers which had faded, while servants cast grains of nard and cinnamon upon the red-hot coals of the censers.

When the dishes and the boxes carved in the shape of birds, fishes, and chimeras, which held the sauces and condiments, had been cleared away, as well as the ivory, bronze, or wooden spatulæ, and the bronze and flint knives, the guests washed their hands, and cups of wine and fermented drinks kept on passing around.

The cup-bearer drew with a long-handled ladle the dark wine and the transparent wine from two great, golden vases adorned with figures of horses and rams, which were held in equilibrium in front of the Pharaoh by means of tripods on which they were set.

Female musicians appeared — for the orchestra of male musicians had withdrawn. A wide gauze tunic covered their slender, youthful bodies, veiling them no more than the pure water of a pool conceals the form

of the bather who plunges into it. Papyrus wreaths bound their thick hair and fell to the ground in long tendrils; lotus flowers bloomed on top of their heads; great golden rings sparkled in their ears, necklaces of enamel and pearl encircled their necks, and bracelets clanked and rattled on their wrists. One played on the harp, another on the lute, a third on the double flute, crossing her arms and using the right for the left flute and the left for the right flute; a fourth placed horizontally against her breast a five-stringed lyre; a fifth struck the onager-skin of a square drum; and a little girl seven or eight years of age, with flowers in her hair and a belt drawn tight around her, beat time by clapping her hands.

The dancers came in. They were slight, slender, and as lithe as serpents; their great eyes shone between the black lines of their lids, their pearly teeth between the red bars of their lips. Long curls floated down on their cheeks. Some wore full tunics striped white and blue, which floated around them like a mist; others wore mere pleated short skirts falling over the hips to the knees, which allowed their beautiful, slender legs and round muscular thighs to be easily seen. They first assumed poses of languid voluptuousness

and indolent grace, then, waving branches of bloom and clinking castanets, shaped like the head of Hathor, striking tambourines with their little closed hands, or making the tanned skin of drums resound under their thumbs, they gave themselves up to swifter steps and to bolder postures; they pirouetted, they whirled with ever-increasing ardour. But the Pharaoh, thoughtful and dreamy, did not condescend to bestow a glance of satisfaction upon them; his fixed gaze did not even fall upon them.

They withdrew, blushing and confused, pressing their palpitating breasts with their hands.

Dwarfs with twisted feet, with swollen and deformed bodies, whose grimaces were fortunate enough at times to bring a smile to the majestic, stony face of the Pharaoh, were no more successful; their contortions did not bring a single smile to his lips, the corners of which remained obstinately fixed.

To the sound of strange music produced by triangular harps, sistra, castanets, cymbals, and bugles, Egyptian clowns wearing high, white mitres of ridiculous shape advanced, closing two fingers of their hand and stretching out the other three, repeating their grotesque gestures with automatic accuracy, and singing

extravagant songs full of dissonances. His Majesty never changed countenance.

Women wearing a small helmet from which depended three long cords ending in a tassel, their wrists and ankles bound with black leather bands, and wearing close fitting drawers suspended by a single brace passed over their shoulders, performed tricks of strength and contortions each more surprising than another; posturing, throwing themselves back, bending their supple bodies like willow branches, and touching the ground with their necks without displacing their heels, supporting in that impossible attitude the weight of their companions; others juggled with a ball, two balls, three balls, before, behind, their arms crossed, astride of or standing upon the loins of one of the women of the company. One, indeed, the cleverest, put on blinkers like Tmei, the goddess of justice, and caught the globes in her hands without letting a single one fall. The Pharaoh was not moved by these marvels.

He cared no more either for the prowess of two combatants who, wearing a cestus on the left arm, fought with sticks. Men throwing at a block of wood knives which struck with miraculous accuracy the spot indicated did not interest him either. He

even refused the draught-board which the lovely Twea, whom he looked upon usually with favour, presented to him as she offered herself as an adversary. In vain Amense, Taïa, Hont-Reché ventured upon timid caresses. He rose and withdrew to his apartments without having uttered a word.

Motionless on the threshold stood the servant who, during the triumphal procession, had noticed the imperceptible gesture of His Majesty.

He said: "O King, loved of the gods! I left the procession, crossed the Nile on a light papyrus-bark and followed the vessel of the woman on whom your hawk glance deigned to fall. She is Tahoser, the daughter of the priest Petamounoph."

The Pharaoh smiled and said: "It is well. I give thee a chariot and its horses, a pectoral ornament of beads of lapis-lazuli and cornelian, with a golden circle weighing as much as the green basalt weight."

Meanwhile the sorrowing women pulled the flowers from their hair, tore their gauze robes, and sobbed, stretched out upon the polished stone floors which reflected, mirror-like, the image of their beautiful bodies, saying, "One of these accursed barbaric captives must have stolen our master's heart."

V

ON the left bank of the Nile stood the villa of Poëri, the young man who had filled Tahoser with such emotion when, proceeding to view the triumphal return of the Pharaoh, she had passed in her ox-drawn car under the balcony whereon leaned carelessly the handsome dreamer.

It was a vast estate, having something of the farm and something of the house of pleasaunce, which stretched between the banks of the river and the foothills of the Libyan chain, over an immense extent of ground, covered during the inundation by the reddish waters laden with fertilising mud, and which during the rest of the year was irrigated by skilfully planned canals.

A wall, built of limestone drawn from the neighbouring mountains, enclosed the garden, the store-houses, the cellars, and the dwelling. The walls sloped slightly inwards and were surmounted by an acroter with metal spikes, capable of stopping whosoever might attempt to climb over. Three doors, the leaves of which were hung on massive pillars, each adorned with a giant

lotus-flower planted on top of the capital, were cut in the wall on three of the sides. In place of the fourth door rose a building which looked out into the garden from one of its façades, and on the road from the other.

The building in no respect resembled the houses in Thebes. The architect had not sought to reproduce either the heavy foundations, the great monumental lines, or the rich materials of city buildings, but had striven to attain elegant lightness, refreshing simplicity, and pastoral gracefulness in harmony with the verdure and the peacefulness of the country.

The lower courses of the building, which the Nile reached in times of high flood, were of sandstone, and the rest of the building of sycamore wood. Tall, fluted columns, extremely slender and resembling the staffs of the standards before the king's palace, sprang from the ground and rose unbroken to the palm-leaved cornice, where swelled out, under a simple cube, their lotus-flowered capitals.

The single story built above the ground-floor did not rise as high as the mouldings which bordered the terraced roof, and thus left an empty space between the ceiling and the flat roof of the villa.

Short, small pillars, with flowery capitals, divided into groups of four by the tall columns, formed an open gallery around this aerial apartment open to every wind.

Windows broader at the base than at the top of the opening, in accordance with the Egyptian style, and closed with double sashes, lighted the first story. The ground-floor was lighted by narrower windows placed closer to each other.

Above the door, which was adorned with deep mouldings, was a cross planted in a heart and framed in a parallelogram cut in the lower part to allow the sign of favourable omen to pass; the meaning being, as every one knows, "A good house."

The whole building was painted in soft, pleasant colours; the lotus of the capitals showed alternately red and blue in the green capsules; the gilded palm-leaves of the cornices stood out upon a blue back-ground; the white walls of the façades set off the painted framework of the windows, and lines of red and green outlined panels and imitated the joints of the stone.

Outside the enclosing wall, which was built flush with the dwelling, stood a row of trees cut to a point,

which formed a screen against the dusty southern wind, always laden with the desert heat.

In front of the building grew a vast vineyard. Stone shafts with lotus capitals placed at symmetrical distances outlined, through the vineyard, walks cutting each other at right angles. Boughs of vine leaves joined one plant to another and formed a succession of leafy arches under which one could walk erect. The ground, carefully raked and heaped up at the foot of each plant, contrasted by its brown colour with the bright green of the leaves, amid which played the sunbeams and the breeze.

On either side of the building two oblong pools bore upon their transparent surface aquatic birds and flowers. At the corners of these pools four great palm-trees spread out fanwise their green wreath of leaves at the top of their scaly trunks.

Compartments, regularly traced by narrow paths, divided the garden around the vineyard, marking the place of each different crop. Along a sort of belt walk which ran entirely around the enclosure dôm palms alternated with sycamores, squares of ground were planted with fig, peach, almond, olive, pomegranate and other fruit trees; others, again, were

planted with ornamental trees only: the tamarisk, the cassia, the acacia, the myrtle, the mimosa, and some still rarer gum-trees found beyond the cataracts of the Nile, under the Tropic of Cancer, in the oases of the Libyan Desert, and upon the shores of the Erythrean Gulf; for the Egyptians are very fond of cultivating shrubs and flowers, and they exact new species as a tribute from the peoples they have conquered.

Flowers of all kinds, and many varieties of water-melons, lupines, and onions adorned the beds. Two other pools of greater size, fed by the covered canal leading from the Nile, each bore a small boat to enable the master of the estate to enjoy the pleasure of fishing. Fishes of divers forms and brilliant colours played in the limpid waters among the stalks and the broad leaves of the lotus. Banks of luxuriant vegetation surrounded these pools and were reflected in their green mirror.

Near each pool rose a kiosk formed of slender columns bearing a light roof and surrounded by an open balcony whence one could enjoy the sight of the waters and breathe the coolness of the morning and the evening while reclining on a rustic seat of wood and reeds.

The garden, lighted by the rising sun, had a bright, happy, restful look. The green of the trees was so brilliant, the colours of the flowers so splendid, air and light filled so joyously the vast enclosure with breeze and sunbeams, the contrast of the rich greenness with the bare whiteness of the chalky sterility of the Libyan chain, the crest of which was seen above the walls cutting into the blue sky, was so marked that one felt the wish to stop and set up one's tent there. It looked like a nest purposely built for a longed-for happiness.

Along the walks travelled servants bearing on their shoulders a yoke of bent wood, from the ends of which hung by ropes two clay jars filled at the reservoirs, the contents of which they poured into small basins dug at the foot of each plant. Others, handling a jar suspended from a pole working on a post, filled with water a wooden gutter which carried it to the parts of the garden that needed irrigating. Gardeners were clipping the trees to a point or into an elliptical shape. With the help of a hoe formed of two pieces of hard wood bound by a cord and thus making a hook, other workmen were preparing the ground for planting.

It was a delightful sight to see these men with their black, woolly hair, their bodies the colour of brick, dressed only in a pair of white drawers, going and coming amid the greenery with orderly activity, singing a rustic song to which their steps kept time. The birds perched on the trees seemed to know them, and scarcely to fly off when, as they passed, they rubbed against the branches.

The door of the building opened, and Poëri appeared on the threshold. Though he was dressed in the Egyptian fashion, his features were not in accordance with the national type, and it took no long observation to see that he did not belong to the native race of the valley of the Nile. He was assuredly not a *Rot'en'no*. His thin aquiline nose, his flat cheeks, his serious-looking, closed lips, the perfect oval of his face, were essentially different from the African nose, the projecting cheek-bones, the thick lips, and broad face characteristic of the Egyptians. Nor was his complexion the same; the copper tint was replaced by an olive pallor, which the rich, pure blood flushed slightly; his eyes, instead of showing black between their lines of antimony, were of a dark blue like the sky of night; his hair, silkier and softer, curled in

less crisp undulations, and his shoulders did not exhibit that rigid, transversal line which is the characteristic sign of the race as represented on the statues of the temples and the frescoes of the tombs.

All these characteristics went to form a remarkable beauty, which Petamounoph's daughter had been unable to resist. Since the day when Poëri had by chance appeared to her, leaning upon the gallery of the building — which was his favourite place when he was not busy with the farm work — she had returned many times under pretext of driving, and had made her chariot pass under the balcony of the villa; but although she had put on her handsomest tunics, fastened around her neck her richest necklaces and encircled her wrists with her most wondrously chased bracelets, wreathed her hair with the freshest lotus-flowers, drawn to the temples the black line of her eyes, and brightened her cheeks with rouge, Poëri had never seemed to pay the smallest attention to her.

And yet Tahoser was rarely beautiful, and the love which the pensive tenant of the villa disdained, the Pharoah would willingly have purchased at a great price. In exchange for the priest's daughter he would have given Twea, Taïa, Amense, Hont-Reché,

his Asiatic captives, his vases of gold and silver, his necklaces of gems, his war chariots, his invincible army, his sceptre, — all, in a word, even his tomb, on which since the beginning of his reign had been working in the darkness thousands upon thousands of workmen.

Love is not the same in the hot regions swept by a fiery wind as on the icy shores where calm descends from heaven with the cold; it is not blood but fire that flows in the veins. So Tahoser languished and fainted, though she breathed perfumes, surrounded herself with flowers, and drank draughts that bring forgetfulness. Music wearied her or overexcited her feelings; she had ceased to take any pleasure in the dances of her companions; at night, sleep fled from her eyelids, and breathless, stifling, her breast heaving with sighs, she would leave her sumptuous couch and stretch herself out upon the broad slabs of the pavement, pressing her bosom against the hard granite as if she wished to breathe in its coolness.

On the night which followed the triumphal entry of the Pharaoh, Tahoser felt so unhappy and life seemed so empty that she determined not to die without having made at least one last effort.

She wrapped herself up in a piece of common stuff, kept on but a single bracelet of odoriferous wood, twisted a piece of striped gauze around her head, and with the first light of the dawn, without being heard by Nofré, who was dreaming of the handsome Ahmosis, she left her room, crossed the garden, drew the bolts of the water gate, proceeded to the quay, waked a waterman asleep in his papyrus boat, and had herself transported to the other bank of the stream.

Staggering and pressing her little hand to her heart to still its beating, she drew near Poëri's dwelling.

It was now broad daylight, and the gates were opening to give passage to the ox teams going to work, and to the flocks going forth to pasture.

Tahoser knelt on the threshold and placed her hand above her head with a supplicating gesture, more beautiful, perhaps, even in this humble attitude and in her mean dress. Her bosom rose and fell and tears streamed down her pale cheeks.

Poëri saw her and took her for what she was, indeed, a most unhappy woman.

"Enter," said he; "enter without fear. This house is hospitable."

VI

TAHOSER, encouraged by the friendly words of Poëri, abandoned her supplicating attitude and rose. A rich glow flushed her cheek but now so pale; shame came back to her with hope; she blushed at the strange action to which love had driven her; she hesitated to pass the threshold which she had crossed so often in her dreams. Her maidenly scruples, stifled for a time by passion, resumed their power in the presence of reality.

The young man, thinking that timidity, the companion of misfortune, alone prevented Tahoser from entering the house, said to her in a soft, musical voice marked by a foreign accent, —

"Enter, maiden, and do not tremble so. My home is large enough to shelter you. If you are weary, rest; if you are thirsty, my servants will bring you pure water cooled in porous clay-jars; if you are hungry, they will set before you wheaten bread, dates, and dried figs."

Petamounoph's daughter, encouraged by these hospitable words, entered the house, which justified the hieroglyph of welcome inscribed upon the gate.

Poëri took her to a room on the ground-floor, the walls of which were painted with green vertical bands ending in lotus flowers, making the apartment pleasant to the eye. A fine mat of reeds woven in symmetrical designs covered the floor. At each corner of the room great sheaves of flowers filled tall vases, held in place by pedestals, and scattered their perfume through the cool shade of the hall. At the back a low sofa, the wood-work of which was ornamented with foliage and chimerical animals, tempted with its broad bed the fatigued or idle guest. Two chairs, the seats made of Nile reeds, with sloping back, strengthened by stays, a wooden foot-stool cut in the shape of a shell and resting upon three legs, an oblong table, also three-legged, bordered with inlaid work and ornamented in the centre with uræus snakes, wreaths, and agricultural symbols, and on which was placed a vase of rose and blue lotus, — completed the furniture of the room, which was pastoral in its simplicity and gracefulness.

Poëri sat down on the sofa. Tahoser, bending one

leg under her thigh and raising one knee, knelt before the young man who fixed upon her a glance full of kindly questioning. She was most lovely in that attitude. The gauze veil in which she was enveloped exhibited, as it fell back, the rich mass of her hair bound with a narrow white ribbon, and revealed her gentle, sweet, sad face. Her sleeveless tunic showed her lovely arms bare to the shoulder and left them free.

"I am called Poëri," said the young man; "I am steward of the royal estates, and have the right to wear the gilded ram's-horns on my state head-dress."

"And I am called Hora," replied Tahoser, who had arranged her little story beforehand. "My parents are dead, their goods were sold by their creditors, leaving me just enough to pay for their burial; so I have been left alone and without means. But since you are kind enough to receive me, I shall repay you for your hospitality. I have been taught the work of women, although my condition did not oblige me to perform it. I can spin and weave linen with thread of various colours; I can imitate flowers and embroider ornaments on stuffs; I can even, when you are tired by your work and overcome

by the heat of the day, delight you with song, harp, or lute."

"Hora, you are welcome to my dwelling," said the young man. "You will find here, without taxing your strength, — for you seem to me to be delicate, — occupation suitable for a maiden who has known better days; among my maids are gentle and good girls who will be pleasant companions for you, and who will show you how we live in this pastoral home. So the days will pass, and perhaps brighter ones will dawn for you. If not, you can quietly grow old in my home in the midst of abundance and peace. The guest whom the gods send is sacred."

Having said these words, Poëri arose, as if to avoid the thanks of the supposed Hora, who had prostrated herself at his feet and was kissing them, as do wretches who have just been granted a favour; but the lover in her had taken the place of the suppliant, and her ripe, rosy lips found it hard to leave those beautiful, clean, white feet that resembled the jasper feet of the gods.

Before going out to superintend the work of the farm, Poëri turned around on the threshold of the room and said, —

"Hora, remain here until I have appointed a room for you. I shall send you some food by one of my servants."

And he walked away quietly, the whip which marked his rank hanging from his wrist. The workmen saluted him, placing one hand on their head and the other to the ground, but by the cordiality of their salute it was easily seen that he was a kind master. Sometimes he stopped to give an order or a piece of advice, for he was greatly skilled in matters of agriculture and gardening. Then he resumed his walk, looking to the right and left and carefully inspecting everything. Tahoser, who had humbly accompanied him to the door, and had crouched on the threshold, her elbow on her knee and her chin on the palm of her hand, followed him with her glance until he disappeared under the leafy arches. She kept on looking long after he had passed out by the gate into the fields.

A servant, in accordance with an order which Poëri had given when he went out, brought on a tray a goose-leg, onions baked in the ashes, wheaten bread and figs, and a jar of water closed with myrtle flowers.

"The master sends you this. Eat, maiden, and regain your strength."

Tahoser was not very hungry, but her part required that she should exhibit some appetite; the poor must necessarily devour the food which pity throws them. So she ate, and drank a long draught of the cool water. The servant having gone, she resumed her contemplative attitude. Innumerable contradictory thoughts filled her mind: sometimes with maidenly shame she repented the step she had taken; at others, carried away by her passion, she exulted in her own audacity. Then she said to herself: "Here I am, it is true, under Poëri's roof; I shall see him freely every day; I shall silently drink in his beauty, which is more that of a god than of a man; I shall hear his lovely voice, which is like the music of the soul. But will he, who never paid any attention to me when I passed by his home dressed in my most brilliant garments, adorned with my richest gems, perfumed with scents and flowers, mounted on my painted and gilded car surmounted by a sunshade, and surrounded like a queen with a retinue of servants, — will he pay more attention to the poor suppliant maiden whom he has received through pity and who is dressed in mean

stuff? Will my wretchedness accomplish what my wealth could not do? It may be, after all, that I am ugly, and that Nofré flatters me when she maintains that from the unknown sources of the Nile to the place where it casts itself into the sea there is no lovelier maid than her mistress. Yet no, — I am beautiful; the blazing eyes of men have told me so a thousand times, and especially have the annoyed airs and the disdainful pouts of the women who passed by me confirmed it. Will Poëri, who has inspired me with such mad passion, never love me? He would have received just as kindly an old, wrinkled woman with withered breasts, clothed in hideous rags, and with feet grimy with dust. Any one but he would at once have recognised, under the disguise of Hora, Tahoser the daughter of the high-priest Petamounoph; but he never cast his eyes upon me any more than does the basalt statue of a god upon the devotees who offer up to it quarters of antelope and baskets of lotus."

These thoughts cast down the courage of Tahoser. Then she regained confidence, and said to herself that her beauty, her youth, her love would surely at last move that insensible heart. She would be

so sweet, so attentive, so devoted, she would use so much art and coquetry in dressing herself, that certainly Poëri would not be able to resist. Then she promised herself to reveal to him that the humble servant-maid was a girl of high rank, possessing slaves, estates, and palaces, and she foresaw, in her imagination, a life of splendid and radiant happiness following upon a period of obscure felicity.

"First and foremost, let me make myself beautiful," she said, as she rose and walked towards one of the pools.

On reaching it, she knelt upon the stone margin, washed her face, her neck, and her shoulders. The disturbed water showed her in its mirror, broken by innumerable ripples, her vague, trembling image which smiled up to her as through green gauze; and the little fishes, seeing her shadow and thinking that crumbs of bread were about to be thrown to them, drew near the edge in shoals. She gathered two or three lotus flowers which bloomed on the surface of the pool, twisted their stems around the band that held in her hair, and made thus a head-dress which all the skill of Nofré could never have equalled, even had she emptied her mistress's jewel-caskets.

When she had finished and rose refreshed and radiant, a tame ibis, which had gravely watched her, drew itself up on its two long legs, stretched out its long neck, and flapped its wings two or three times as if to applaud her.

Having finished her toilet, Tahoser resumed her place at the door of the house and waited for Poëri. The heavens were of a deep blue; the light shimmered in visible waves through the transparent air; intoxicating perfumes rose from the flowers and the plants; the birds hopped amid the branches, pecking at the berries; the fluttering butterflies chased one another. This charming spectacle was rendered yet more bright by human activity, which enlivened it by the communication of a soul. The gardeners came and went, the servants returned laden with panniers of grass or vegetables; others, standing at the foot of the fig trees, caught in baskets the fruits thrown to them by monkeys trained to pluck them and perched on the highest branches.

Tahoser contemplated with delight this beautiful landscape, the peacefulness of which was filling her soul, and she said to herself, "How sweet it would be to be beloved here, amid the light, the scents, and the flowers."

Poëri returned. He had finished his tour of inspection, and withdrew to his room to spend the burning hours of the day. Tahoser followed him timidly, and stood near the door, ready to leave at the slightest gesture, but Poëri signed to her to remain.

She came forward timidly and knelt upon the mat.

"You tell me, Hora, that you can play the lute. Take that instrument hanging upon the wall, strike its cords and sing me some old air, very sweet, very tender, and very slow. The sleep which comes to one cradled by music is full of lovely dreams."

The priest's daughter took down the mandore, drew near the couch on which Poëri was stretched, leaned the head of the lute against the wooden bed-head hollowed out in the shape of a half-moon, stretched her arm to the end of the handle of the instrument, the body of which was pressed against her beating heart, let her hand flutter along the strings, and struck a few chords. Then she sang in a true, though somewhat trembling voice, an old Egyptian air, the vague sigh breathed by the ancestors and transmitted from generation to generation, and in which recurred constantly one and the same phrase of a sweet and penetrating monotony.

"In very truth," said Poëri, turning his dark blue eyes upon the maid, "you know rhythm as does a professional musician, and you might practise your art in the palaces of kings. But you give to your song a new expression; the air you are singing, one would think you are inventing it, and you impart to it a magical charm. Your voice is no longer that of mourning; another woman seems to shine through you as the light shines from behind a veil. Who are you?"

"I am Hora," replied Tahoser. "Have I not already told you my story? Only, I have washed from my face the dust of the road, I have smoothed out the folds in my crushed gown and put a flower in my hair. If I am poor, that is no reason why I should be ugly, and the gods sometimes refuse beauty to the rich. But does it please you that I should go on?"

"Yes. Repeat that air; it fascinates, benumbs me, it takes away my memory like a cup of nepenthe. Repeat it until sleep and forgetfulness fall upon my eyelids."

Poëri's eyes, fixed at first upon Tahoser, soon were half-closed, and then completely so. The maiden con-

tinued to strike the strings of the mandore, and sang more and more softly the refrain of her song. Poëri slept. She stopped and fanned him with a palm-leaf fan thrown on the table.

Poëri was handsome, and sleep imparted to his pure features an indescribable expression of languor and tenderness. His long eyelashes falling upon his cheeks seemed to conceal from him a celestial vision, and his beautiful, red, half-open lips trembled as if they were speaking mute words to an invisible being. After a long contemplation, emboldened by silence and solitude, Tahoser, forgetting herself, bent over the sleeper's brow, kept back her breath, pressed her heart with her hand, and placed a timid, furtive, winged kiss upon it. Then she drew back ashamed and blushing. The sleeper had faintly felt in his dream Tahoser's lips; he uttered a sigh and said in Hebrew, "Oh, Ra'hel, beloved Ra'hel!"

Fortunately these words of an unknown tongue conveyed no meaning to Tahoser, and she again took up the palm-leaf fan, hoping yet fearing that Poëri would awake.

VII

WHEN day dawned, Nofré, who slept on a cot at her mistress's feet, was surprised at not hearing Tahoser call her as usual by clapping her hands. She rose on her elbow and saw that the bed was empty; yet the first beams of the sun, striking the frieze of the portico, were only now beginning to cast on the wall the shadow of the capitals and of the upper part of the shafts of the pillars. Usually Tahoser was not an early riser, and she rarely rose without the assistance of her women. Neither did she ever go out until after her hair had been dressed, and perfumed water had been poured over her lovely body, while she knelt, her hands crossed upon her bosom.

Nofré, feeling uneasy, put on a transparent gown, slipped her feet into sandals of palm fibre, and set out in search of her mistress. She looked for her first under the portico of the two courts, thinking that, unable to sleep, Tahoser had perhaps gone to enjoy the coolness of dawn in the inner cloisters; but she was not there.

"Let me visit the garden," said Nofré to herself; "perhaps she took a fancy to see the night dew sparkle on the leaves of the plants and to watch for once the awakening of the flowers."

Although she traversed the garden in every direction, she found it absolutely untenanted. Nofré looked along every walk, under every arbour, under every arch, into every grove, but unsuccessfully. She entered the kiosk at the end of the arbour, but she did not find Tahoser; she hastened to the pond, in which her mistress might have taken a fancy to bathe, as she sometimes did with her companions, upon the granite steps which led from the edge of the basin to the bottom of fine sand. The broad nymphœa-leaves floated on the surface, and did not appear to have been disturbed; the ducks, plunging their blue necks into the calm water, alone rippled it, and they saluted Nofré with joyous cries.

The faithful maid began to feel seriously alarmed; she roused the whole household. The slaves and the maids emerged from their cells, and informed by Nofré of the strange disappearance of Tahoser, proceeded to make most minute search. They ascended the terraces, rummaged every room, every corner,

every place where she might possibly be. Nofré, in her agitation, even opened the boxes containing the dresses and the caskets holding the jewels, as if they could possibly have held her mistress. Unquestionably Tahoser was not within the dwelling.

An old and consummately prudent servant bethought himself of examining the sand of the walks in search of the footprints of his young mistress. The heavy bolts of the gate leading into the city were in place, and this proved that Tahoser had not gone out that way. It is true that Nofré had carelessly traversed every path, marking them with her sandals, but by bending close to the ground, old Souhem speedily noticed among Nofré's footprints a slight imprint made by a narrow, dainty sole belonging to a much smaller foot than the maid's. He followed this track, which led him, passing under the arbour, from the pylon in the court to the water gate. The bolts, as he pointed out to Nofré, had been drawn, and the two leaves of the door were held merely by their weight; therefore Petamounoph's daughter had gone out that way. Farther on the track was lost; the brick quay had preserved no trace; the boatman who had carried Tahoser across had not returned to his station; the

others were asleep, and when questioned replied that they had seen nothing. One, however, did report that a woman, poorly dressed and belonging apparently to the lowest class, had been ferried over early to the other side of the river to the Memnonia quarter, no doubt to carry out some funeral rite. This description, which in no way tallied with the elegant Tahoser, completely upset the suppositions of Nofré and Souhem.

They returned to the house sad and disappointed. The men and women servants sat down on the ground in desolate attitudes, letting one of their hands hang down, its palm turned up, and placing the other on their head, all of them calling together in plaintive chorus, "Woe! woe! woe! Our mistress is gone!"

"By Oms, the dog of the lower regions, I shall find her," said old Souhem, "even if I have to walk living to the very confines of the Western Region to which travel the dead. She was a kind mistress; she gave us food in abundance, did not exact excessive labour, and caused us to be beaten only when we deserved it and in moderation. Her foot was not heavy on our bowed necks, and in her home a slave might believe himself free."

"Woe! woe! woe!" repeated the men and women as they cast dust upon their heads.

"Alas! dear mistress, who knows where you are now?" said her faithful maid, whose tears were flowing. "Perchance some enchanter compelled you to leave your palace through a spell in order to work his odious will on you. He will lacerate your fair body, will draw your heart out through a cut like that made by the dissectors, will throw your remains to the ferocious crocodiles, and on the day of reunion your mutilated soul will find shapeless remains only. You will not go to join, at the end of the passages of which the undertaker keeps the plan, the painted and gilded mummy of your father, the high-priest Petamounoph, in the funeral chamber which has been cut out for you."

"Calm yourself, Nofré," said old Souhem; "let us not despair too soon. It may be that Tahoser will soon return. She has no doubt yielded to some fancy which we cannot guess, and presently we shall see her come back, gay and smiling, holding aquatic flowers in her hands."

Wiping her eyes with the corner of her dress, the maid nodded assent. Souhem crouched down, bend-

ing his knees like those of the dog-faced figures which are roughly carved out of a square block of basalt, and pressing his temples between his dry hands, seemed to reflect deeply. His face of a reddish brown, his sunken eyes, his prominent jaws, the deeply wrinkled cheeks, his straight hair framing in his face like bristles, made him altogether like the monkey-faced gods. He was certainly not a god, but he looked very much like a monkey.

The result of his meditations, anxiously awaited by Nofré, was thus expressed: "The daughter of Petamounoph is in love."

"Who told you?" cried Nofré, who thought that she was the only one who could read her mistress's heart.

"No one; but Tahoser is very beautiful; she has already beheld sixteen times the rise and fall of the Nile. Sixteen is the number symbolical of voluptuousness; and for some time past she has been calling at unaccustomed hours her players on the harp, the lute, and the flute, like one who seeks to calm the agitation of her heart by music."

"You speak sensibly, and wisdom dwells in your old bald head. But how have you learned to know

women, — you who merely dig the earth in the garden and bear jars of water on your shoulders?"

The slave opened his lips with a silent smile and exhibited two rows of teeth fit to crush date-stones. The grin meant, "I have not always been old and a captive."

Enlightened by Souhem's suggestion, Nofré immediately thought of the handsome Ahmosis, the oëris of the Pharaoh, who so often passed below the terrace, and who had looked so splendid on his war chariot in the triumphal procession. As she was in love with him herself, though she was not fully aware of it, she assumed that her mistress shared her feelings. She put on a somewhat heavier dress and repaired to the officer's dwelling. It was there, she fancied, that Tahoser would certainly be found.

The young officer was seated on a low seat at the end of the room. On the walls hung trophies of different weapons: the leather tunic covered with bronze plates on which was engraved the cartouche of the Pharaoh; the brazen poniard, with the jade handle open-worked to allow the fingers to pass through; the flat-edged battle-axe, the falchion with curved blade; the helmet with its double plume of

ostrich-feathers; the triangular bow; and the red-feathered arrows. His distinctive necklaces were placed upon pedestals, and open coffers showed booty taken from the enemy.

When he saw Nofré, whom he knew well, standing on the threshold, he felt quick pleasure, his brown cheeks flushed, his muscles quivered, his heart beat high. He thought Nofré brought him a message from Tahoser, although the priest's daughter had never taken notice of his glances; but the man to whom the gods have imparted the gift of beauty easily fancies that all women fall in love with him. He rose and took a few steps towards Nofré, whose anxious glance examined the corners of the room to make sure whether Tahoser was there or not.

"What brings you here, Nofré?" said Ahmosis, seeing that the young maid, full of her search, did not break silence. "Your mistress is well, I hope, for I think I saw her yesterday at the Pharaoh's entry."

"You should know whether my mistress is well better than any one else," replied Nofré; "for she has fled from her home without informing any one of her intentions. I could swear by Hathor that you know the refuge which she chose."

"She has disappeared! — what are you talking about?" cried Ahmosis, with a surprise that was unquestionably genuine.

"I thought she loved you," said Nofré, "and sometimes the best-behaved maidens lose their heads. So she is not here?"

"The god Phrah, who sees everything, knows where she is, but not one of his beams, which end in hands, has fallen on her within these walls. Look for yourself and visit every room."

"I believe you, Ahmosis, and I must go; for if Tahoser had come, you could not conceal it from her faithful Nofré, who would have asked nothing better than to serve your loves. You are handsome; she is very rich and a virgin; the gods would have beheld your marriage with pleasure."

Nofré returned to the house more anxious and more upset than before. She feared that the servants might be suspected of having killed Tahoser in order to seize on her riches, and that the judges would seek to make them confess under torture what they did not actually know.

The Pharaoh, on his part, was also thinking of Tahoser. After having made the libations and the

offerings required by the ritual, he had seated himself in the inner court of the harem, and was sunk in thought, paying no attention to the gambols of his women, who, nude and crowned with flowers, were disporting themselves in the transparent waters of the piscina, splashing each other and uttering shrill, sonorous bursts of laughter, in order to attract the attention of the master, who had not made up his mind, contrary to his habit, which of them should be the favourite queen that week.

It was a charming picture which these beautiful women presented; in a framework of shrubs and flowers, in the centre of the court, surrounded by columns painted in brilliant colours, in the clear light of an azure sky, across which flew from time to time an ibis with outstretched neck and trailing legs, their shapely bodies shone in the water like submerged statues of jasper.

Amense and Twea, weary of swimming, had emerged from the water, and kneeling on the edge of the basin, were spreading out to dry in the sun their thick black hair, the long locks of which made their white skins seem whiter still. A few last drops of water ran down their shining shoulders and their arms

polished like jade. Maids rubbed them with aromatic oil and essences, while a young Ethiopian girl held out the calyx of a large flower so that they might breathe its perfume.

It might have been thought that the artist who had carved the decorative *bassi-relievi* of the rooms in the harem had taken these graceful groups as models; but the Pharaoh could not have looked with a colder glance at the designs cut in the stone. Perched on the back of his armchair the tame monkey was eating dates and cracking its jaws; against the master's legs the tame cat rubbed itself, arching its back; the deformed dwarf pulled the monkey's tail and the cat's moustaches, making the one scratch and the other chatter, a performance which usually caused His Majesty to smile; but His Majesty was not in a smiling mood on that day. He put the cat aside, made the monkey get off the armchair, smote the dwarf on the head, and walked toward the granite apartments.

Each of those rooms was formed of blocks of prodigious size, and closed by stone gates which no human power could have forced unless the secret of opening them were known. Within these halls were kept the

riches of the Pharaoh, and the booty taken from conquered nations. They held ingots of precious metals, crowns of gold and silver, neckplates and bracelets of cloisonné enamel, earrings which shone like the disc of Moui, necklaces of seven rows of cornelian, lapis-lazuli, red jasper, pearls, agates, sardonyx, and onyx; exquisitely chased anklets, belts, with plates engraved with hieroglyphs, rings with scarabæi set in them; quantities of fishes, crocodiles, and hearts stamped out of gold, serpents in enamel twisted on themselves; bronze vases, flagons of wavy alabaster, and of blue glass on which wound white spirals; coffers of enamelled ware; boxes of sandal wood of strange and chimerical forms; heaps of aromatic gums from all countries; blocks of ebony; precious stuffs so fine that a whole piece could have been pulled through a ring; white and black ostrich plumes, and others coloured in various ways; monstrously huge elephant's-tusks, cups of gold, silver, gilded glass; statues marvellous both as regards the material and the workmanship.

In every room the Pharaoh caused to be taken a litter-load borne by two robust slaves of Kousch and Scheto, and clapping his hands, he called Timopht,

the servant who had followed Tahoser, and said to him, "Have all these things taken to Tahoser, the daughter of the high-priest Petamounoph, from the Pharaoh."

Timopht placed himself at the head of the procession, which crossed the Nile on a royal barge, and soon the slaves with their load reached Tahoser's house.

"For Tahoser, from the Pharaoh," said Timopht, knocking at the door.

At the sight of those treasures Nofré nearly fainted, half with fear, half with amazement. She dreaded lest the King should put her to death on learning that the priest's daughter was no longer there.

"Tahoser has gone," said she, tremulously, "and I swear by the four sacred geese, Amset, Sis, Soumauts, and Kebhsniv, which fly to the four quarters of the wind, that I know not where she is."

"The Pharaoh beloved of Phré, favourite of Ammon Ra, has sent these gifts, — I cannot take them back. Keep them until Tahoser is found. You shall answer for them on your head. Have them put away in rooms and guarded by faithful servants," replied the envoy of the King.

When Timopht returned to the palace and, prostrate, his elbows close to his sides, his brow in the dust, said that Tahoser had vanished, the King became very wroth, and he struck the slab of the flooring so fiercely with his sceptre that the slab was split.

VIII

TAHOSER, nevertheless, scarce bestowed a thought on Nofré, her favourite maid, or on the anxiety which her absence would necessarily cause. The beloved mistress had completely forgotten her beautiful home in Thebes, her servants, and her ornaments, — a most difficult and incredible thing in a woman. The daughter of Petamounoph had not the least suspicion of the Pharaoh's love for her; she had not observed the glance full of desire which had fallen upon her from the heights of that majesty which nothing on earth could move. Had she seen it, she would have deposited the royal love as an offering, with all the flowers of her soul, at the feet of Poëri.

While driving her spindle with her toe to make it ascend along the thread, — for this was the task which had been set her, — she followed with her glance every motion of the young Hebrew, her looks enveloped him like a caress. She silently enjoyed the happiness of remaining near him in the building to which he had given her access.

If Poëri had turned towards her, he would no doubt have been struck by the moist brilliancy of her eyes, the sudden blushes which flushed her fair cheeks, the quick beating of her heart which might be guessed by the rising and falling of her bosom; but seated at a table, he bent over a leaf of papyrus on which, with the help of a reed, taking ink from a hollowed slab of alabaster, he inscribed accounts in demotic numbers.

Did Poëri perceive the evident love of Tahoser for him? Or for some secret reason, did he pretend not to perceive it? His manner towards her was gentle and kindly, but reserved, as if he sought to prevent or repel some importunate confession which it would have given him pain to reply to. And yet the sham Hora was very beautiful. Her charms, betrayed by the poverty of her dress, were all the more beautiful; and just as in the hottest hours of the day a luminous vapour is seen quivering upon the gleaming earth, so did an atmosphere of love shimmer around her. On her half-open lips her passion fluttered like a bird that seeks to take its flight; and softly, very softly, when she was sure that she would not be heard, she repeated like a monotonous cantilena, "Poëri, I love you."

It was harvest time, and Poëri went out to oversee the workmen. Tahoser, who could no more leave him than the shadow can leave the body, followed him timidly, fearing lest he should tell her to remain in the house; but the young man said to her in a voice marked by no accent of anger, —

"Grief is lightened by the sight of the peaceful work of agriculture, and if some painful remembrance of vanished prosperity weighs down your soul, it will disappear at the sight of this joyous activity. These things must be novel to you, for your skin, which the sun has never kissed, your delicate feet, your slender hands, and the elegance with which you drape yourself in the piece of coarse stuff which serves you for a vestment, prove to me that you have always inhabited cities, and have lived in the midst of refinement and luxury. Come, then, and sit down, while still turning your spindle, under the shadow of that tree, where the harvesters have hung up, to keep it cool, the skin which holds their drink."

Tahoser obeyed and sat down under the tree, her arms crossed on her knees and her knees up to her chin. From the garden wall, the plain stretched to the foot of the Libyan chain like a yellow sea

over which the least breath of air drove waves of gold. The light was so intense that the golden tone of the grain whitened in places and became silvery. In the rich mud of the Nile the grain had grown strong, straight, and high like javelins, and never had a richer harvest, flaming and crackling with heat, been outspread in the sun. The crop was abundant enough to fill up to the ceiling the range of vaulted granaries which rose near the cellars.

The workmen had already been a long while at work, and here and there out of the waves of the corn showed their woolly or close-shaven heads covered with pieces of white stuff, and their naked torsos the colour of baked brick. They bent and rose with a regular motion, cutting the grain just below the ear, as regularly as if they had followed a line marked out by a cord. Behind them in the furrows walked the gleaners with esparto bags, in which they placed the harvested ears, and which they then carried on their shoulders, or suspended from a cross-bar and with the help of a companion, to grinding-mills situated some distance apart. Sometimes the breathless harvesters stopped to take breath, and putting their sickles under their right arm drank a draught of

water. Then they quickly resumed their work, fearing the foreman's stick.

The harvested grain was spread on the threshing-floor in layers evened with a pitchfork, and slightly higher on the edges on account of the additional basketfuls which were being poured on.

Then Poëri signed to the ox-driver to bring on his animals. They were superb oxen with long horns, curved like the head-dress of Isis, with high withers, deep dewlaps, clean, muscular limbs; the brand of the estate, stamped with a red-hot iron, showed upon their flanks. They walked slowly, bearing a horizontal yoke which bore equally upon the heads of the four.

They were driven on to the threshing-floor; urged by the double-lashed whip, they began to trample in a circle, making the grain spring from the ear under their cloven hoofs; the sun shone on their lustrous coats, and the dust which they raised ascended to their nostrils, so that after going around about twenty times, they would lean one against another, and in spite of the hissing whip which lashed their flanks, they would unmistakably slacken their pace. To encourage them, the driver who followed them, hold-

ing by the tail the nearest animal, began to sing in a joyous, quick rhythm the old ox-song: "Turn for yourselves, O oxen, turn for yourselves; measures for you, and measures for your masters." And the team, with new spirit, started on and disappeared in a cloud of yellow dust that sparkled like gold.

The work of the oxen done, came servants who, armed with wooden scoops, threw the grain into the air and let it fall to separate it from the straw, the awn, and the shell. The grain thus winnowed was put into bags, the numbers of which were noted by a scribe, and carried to the lofts, which were reached by ladders.

Tahoser under the shadow of her tree enjoyed this animated and grandiose spectacle, and often her heedless hand forgot to spin the thread. The day was waning, and already the sun, which had risen behind Thebes, had crossed the Nile and was sinking towards the Libyan chain, behind which its disc sets every evening. It was the hour when the cattle returned from the fields to the stable. She watched near Poëri the long pastoral procession.

First was seen advancing the vast herd of oxen, some white, others red, some black with lighter

spots, others piebald, others brindled. They were of all colours and all sizes. They passed by, lifting up their lustrous mouths whence hung filaments of saliva, opening their great, gentle eyes; the more impatient, smelling the stables, half raised themselves for a moment and peered above the horned multitude, with which, as they fell, they were soon confounded; the less skilful, outstripped by their companions, uttered long, plaintive bellows as if to protest. Near the oxen walked the herds with their whip and their rolled up cord.

On arriving near Poëri they knelt down, and, with their elbows close to their sides, touched the ground with their lips as a mark of respect. Scribes wrote down the number of heads of cattle upon tablets.

Behind the oxen came the asses, trotting along and kicking under the blows of the donkey drivers. These had smooth-shaven heads, and were dressed in a mere linen girdle, the end of which fell between their legs. The donkeys went past, shaking their long ears and trampling the ground with their little, hard hoofs. The donkey drivers performed the same genuflection as the ox-herds, and the scribes noted also the exact number of the animals.

Then it was the turn of the goats. They arrived, headed by the he-goat, their broken and shrill voices trembling with pleasure; the goat-herds had much difficulty in restraining their high spirits and in bringing back to the main body the marauding ones which strayed away. They were counted, like the oxen and the asses, and with the same ceremonial the goat-herds prostrated themselves at Poëri's feet.

The procession was closed by the geese, which, weary with walking on the road, balanced themselves on their web feet, flapped their wings noisily, stretched out their necks, and uttered hoarse cries. Their number was taken, and the tablets handed to the steward of the domain. Long after the oxen, the asses, the goats, and the geese had gone in, a column of dust which the wind could not sweep away still rose slowly into the heavens.

"Well, Hora," said Poëri to Tahoser, "has the sight of the harvest and the flocks amused you? These are our pastoral pleasures. We have not here, as in Thebes, harpists and dancers; but agriculture is holy; it is the nurse of man, and he who sows a grain of corn does a deed agreeable to the gods. Now come and take your meal with your

companions. For my part, I am going back to the house to calculate how many bushels of wheat the ears have produced."

Tahoser put one hand to the ground and the other on her head as a mark of respectful assent, and withdrew.

In the dining-hall laughed and chattered a number of young servants as they ate their onions and cakes of doora and dates. A small earthenware vase full of oil, in which dipped a wick, gave them light, — for night had fallen, — and cast a yellow light upon their brown cheeks and bodies which no garment veiled. Some were seated on ordinary wooden seats, others leaned against the wall with one leg drawn up.

"Where does the master go like that every evening?" said a little, sly-looking maid, as she peeled a pomegranate with pretty, monkey-like gestures.

"The master goes where he pleases," replied a tall slave, who was chewing the petals of a flower. "Is he to tell you what he does? It is not you, in any case, who will keep him here."

"Why not I as well as another?" answered the child, piqued.

The tall slave shrugged her shoulders.

"Hora herself, who is fairer and more beautiful than any of us, could not manage it. Though he bears an Egyptian name and is in the service of the Pharaoh, he belongs to the barbarous race of Israel, and if he goes out at night, it is no doubt to be present at the sacrifices of children which the Hebrews perform in desert places, where the owl hoots, the hyena howls, and the adder hisses."

Tahoser quietly left the room without a word, and concealed herself in the garden behind the mimosa bushes. After waiting two hours, she saw Poëri issue forth into the country. Light and silent as a shadow, she started to follow him.

IX

POËRI, who was armed with a strong palm stick, walked towards the river along a causeway built over a field of submerged papyrus which, leafy at their base, sent up on either hand their straight stalks six and eight cubits high, ending in a tuft of fibre and looking like the lances of an army in battle array.

Holding in her breath and walking on tiptoe, Tahoser followed him on the narrow road. There was no moon that night, and the thick papyrus would in any case have been sufficient to conceal the young girl, who remained somewhat behind.

An open space had to be crossed. The sham Hora let Poëri go on first, bent down, made herself as small as she could, and crawled along the ground. Next they entered a mimosa wood, and, concealed by the clumps of trees, Tahoser was able to proceed without having to take as many precautions. She was so close to Poëri, whom she feared to lose sight of in the darkness, that very often the branches that he pushed aside slapped her in the face; but she paid no attention to

this. A feeling of burning jealousy drove her to seek the solution of the mystery, which she did not interpret as did the servants in the house. Not for one moment had she believed that the young Hebrew went out thus every night to perform any infamous and profane rite; she believed that a woman was at the bottom of these nocturnal excursions, and she wanted to know who her rival was. The cold kindness of Poëri had proved to her that his heart was already won; otherwise, how could he have remained insensible to charms famous throughout Thebes and the whole of Egypt? Would he have pretended not to understand a love that would have filled with pride oëris, priests, temple scribes, and even princes of the royal blood?

On reaching the river shore, Poëri descended a few steps cut out of the slope of the bank, and bent down as if he were casting off a rope. Tahoser, lying flat on the summit of the bank, above which the top of her head alone showed, saw to her great despair that the mysterious stroller was casting off a light papyrus bark, narrow and long like a fish, and that he was making ready to cross the river. The next moment he sprang into the boat, shoved off with his foot, and sculled

into the open with a single oar placed at the stern of the skiff.

The poor girl was plunged in grief and despair: she was going to lose track of the secret which it was so important that she should learn. What was she to do? Retrace her steps, her heart a prey to suspicion and uncertainty, the worst of evils? She summoned all her courage and soon made up her mind. It was useless to think of looking for another boat. She let herself down the bank, drew off her dress in a twinkling, and fastened it in a roll upon her head; then she boldly plunged into the river, taking care not to splash. As supple as a water-snake, she stretched out her lovely arms over the dark waves in which quivered the reflection of the stars, and began to follow the boat at a distance. She swam superbly, for every day she practised with her women in the vast piscina in her palace, and no one cleaved the waters more skilfully than Tahoser.

The current, less swift at this point, did not greatly hinder her, but in the centre of the stream she had to strike out in the boiling water and to swim faster in order to avoid being carried to leeward. Her breath came shorter and quicker, and yet she held it in lest

the young Hebrew should hear her. Sometimes a higher wave lapped with its foam her half-open lips, wetted her hair, and even reached her dress rolled up in a bundle. Happily for her, — for her strength was beginning to give way, — she soon found herself in stiller water. A bundle of reeds coming down the river touched her as it passed, and filled her with quick terror. The dark, green mass looked in the darkness like the back of a crocodile; Tahoser thought she had felt the rough skin of the monster; but she recovered from her terror and said, as she swam on, "What matter if the crocodiles eat me up, if Poëri loves me not?"

There was real danger, especially at night. During the day the constant crossing of boats and the work going on along the quays drove away the crocodiles, which went to shores less frequented by man to wallow in the mud and to sun themselves; but at night they became bold again.

Tahoser did not think of them; love is no calculator, and even if she had thought of this form of peril, she would have braved it, timid though she was, and frightened by an obstinate butterfly that mistaking her for a flower kept fluttering around her.

Suddenly the boat stopped, although the bank was still some distance away. Poëri, ceasing to scull, seemed to cast an uneasy glance around him. He had perceived the whitish spot made on the water by Tahoser's rolled up dress. Thinking she was discovered, the intrepid swimmer bravely dived, resolved not to come to the surface, even were she to drown, until Poëri's suspicions had been dispelled.

"I could have sworn somebody was swimming behind me," said Poëri, as he went on sculling again; "but who would venture into the Nile at such a time as this? I must have been crazy. I mistook for a human head covered with linen a tuft of white reeds, or perhaps a mere flake of foam, for I can see nothing now."

When Tahoser, whose temples were beginning to beat violently, and who began to see red flashes in the dark waters of the river, rose hastily to fill her lungs with a long breath of air, the papyrus boat had resumed its confident way, and Poëri was handling the scull with the imperturbable phlegm of the allegorical personages who row the barge of Maut on the *bassi-relievi* and the paintings of the temples. The bank was only a few strokes off; the vast shadow of the pylons and

the huge walls of the Northern Palace — the dark pile of which was faintly seen surmounted by the pyramidions of six obelisks through the violet blue of the night — spread immense and formidable over the river, and sheltered Tahoser, who could swim without fear of being noticed.

Poëri landed a little below the palace and fastened his boat to a post so as to find it on his return. Then he took his palm stick and ascended the slope of the quay with a swift step.

Poor Tahoser, almost worn out, clung with her stiffened hands to the first step of the stair, and with difficulty drew from the stream her dripping limbs, which the contact of the air made heavier as she suddenly felt the fatigue. But the worst of her task was over. She climbed the steps, one hand pressed to her quick-beating heart, the other placed on her head to steady her rolled up and soaked dress. After having noticed the direction in which Poëri was walking, she sat down on top of the bank, untied her dress, and put it on. The contact of the wet stuff made her shudder slightly, yet the night air was soft and the southern breeze blew warm; but she was stiff and feverish, and her little teeth were chattering. She summoned up

her energy, and gliding close by the sloping walls of the giant buildings, she managed not to lose sight of the young Hebrew, who turned around the corner of the mighty brick walls of the palace and entered the streets of Thebes.

After walking for some fifteen minutes, the palaces, the temples, the splendid dwellings vanished, and were replaced by humbler houses; granite, sandstone, and limestone were replaced by unbaked bricks and by clay worked with straw. Architectural design disappeared; low huts showed around like blisters or warts upon lonely places, upon waste fields, and were changed by the darkness into monstrous shapes. Pieces of wood and moulded bricks arranged in heaps obstructed the way. Out of the silence rose strange, troubling sounds: an owl whirled through the air, lean dogs, raising their long, pointed noses, followed with plaintive bay the erratic flight of a bat; scorpions and frightened reptiles scurrying by, made the dry grass rattle.

"Could Harphre have spoken the truth?" thought Tahoser, impressed by the sinister aspect of the place. "Is it possible that Poëri comes here to sacrifice a child to those barbarous gods who love blood and suf-

fering? Never was any place better fitted for cruel rites."

Meanwhile, profiting by the shadow of corners, the ends of walls, the clumps of vegetation, and the unevenness of the ground, she kept at the same distance from Poëri.

"Even if I were to be present as an invisible witness at some scene as frightful as a nightmare, to hear the cries of the victim, to see the priest, his hands red with blood, draw from the little body the smoking heart, I should go on to the end," said Tahoser to herself, as she saw the young Hebrew enter a hut built of clay, through the crevices of which shone a few rays of yellow light.

When Poëri was fairly within, the daughter of Petamounoph approached, though not a pebble cracked under her light step, nor a dog marked her presence by a bark. She went around the hut, pressing her hand to her heart and holding in her breath, and discovered, by seeing it shine against the dark ground of the clay wall, a crack wide enough to allow her glance to penetrate the interior. A small lamp lighted the room, which was less bare than might have been supposed from the outward appearance of the cabin.

The smooth walls were as polished as stucco. On wooden pedestals, painted in various colours, were placed vases of gold and silver; jewels sparkled in half-open coffers; dishes of brilliant metal shone on the wall; and a nosegay of rare flowers bloomed in an enamelled jar in the centre of a small table. But it was not these details which interested Tahoser, although the contrast of this concealed luxury with the external poverty of the dwelling had at first somewhat surprised her. Her attention was irresistibly attracted by another object.

On a low platform covered with matting was a marvellously beautiful woman of an unknown race. She was fairer than any of the maids of Egypt, as white as milk, as white as a lily, as white as the ewes which have just been washed. Her eyebrows were curved like ebony bows, and their points met at the root of the thin, aquiline nose, the nostrils of which were as rosy as the interior of a shell; her eyes were like doves' eyes, bright and languorous; her lips were like two bands of purple, and as they parted showed rows of pearls; her hair hung on either side of her rosy cheeks in black, lustrous locks like two bunches of ripe grapes. Earrings shimmered

in her ears, and necklaces of golden plates inlaid with silver sparkled around a neck that was round and polished like an alabaster column. Her dress was peculiar. It consisted of a full tunic embroidered with stripes and symmetrical designs of various colours, falling from her shoulders half-way down her legs and leaving her arms free and bare.

The young Hebrew sat down by her on the matting, and spoke to her words which Tahoser could not understand, but the meaning of which she unfortunately guessed too well; for Poëri and Ra'hel spoke in the language of their country, so sweet to the exile and captive. Yet hope dies hard in the loving breast.

"Perhaps it is his sister," said Tahoser, "and he goes to see her in secret, being unwilling that it should be known that he belongs to that enslaved race."

Then she put her eye to the crevice and listened with painful and intense attention to the harmonious and rhythmic language, every syllable of which held a secret which she would have given her life to learn, and which sounded in her ears vague, swift, and unmeaning like the wind in the leaves and the water on the bank.

"She is very beautiful for a sister," she murmured, as she cast a jealous glance upon the strange and charming face with its red lips and its pale complexion that was set off by ornaments of exotic shapes, and the beauty of which had something fatally mysterious about it.

"Oh, Ra'hel, my beloved Ra'hel!" repeated Poëri often.

Tahoser remembered having heard him whisper that name while she was fanning him in his sleep.

"He thought of her even in his dreams. No doubt Ra'hel is her name." And the poor child felt in her breast a sharp pang as if all the uræus snakes of the entablatures, all the royal asps of the Pharaonic crowns, had struck their venomous fangs in her heart.

Ra'hel bowed her head on Poëri's shoulder like a flower overladen with sunshine and love; the lips of the young man touched the hair of the lovely Jewess, who fell back slowly, yielding her brow and half-closed eyes to his earnest and timid caress. Their hands, which had sought each other, were now clasped and feverishly pressed together.

"Oh, why did I not surprise him in some impious and mysterious ceremony, slaying with his own hands

a human victim, drinking its blood in a cup of black ware, rubbing his face with it? It seems to me that I should have suffered less than at the sight of that lovely woman whom he embraces so timidly," murmured Tahoser in a faint voice as she sank on the ground in a corner by the hut.

Twice she strove to rise, but she fell back on her knees. Darkness came over her, her limbs gave way, and she fell in a swoon.

Meanwhile Poëri issued from the hut, giving a last kiss to Ra'hel.

X

THE Pharaoh, raging and anxious on hearing of the disappearance of Tahoser, had given way to that desire for change which possesses a heart tormented by an unsatisfied passion. To the deep grief of Amense, Hont-Reché, and Twea, his favourites, who had endeavoured to retain him in the Summer Palace by all the resources of feminine coquetry, he now inhabited the Northern Palace on the other side of the Nile. His fierce preoccupation was irritated by the presence and the chatter of his women; they displeased him because they were not Tahoser. He now thought ugly those beauties who had seemed to him formerly so fair; their young, slender, graceful bodies, their voluptuous attitudes, their long eyes brightened by antimony and flashing with desire, their purple lips, white teeth, and languishing smiles, — everything in them, even the perfume of their cool skin, as delicate as a bouquet of flowers or a box of scent, had become odious to him. He seemed to be angry with them for having loved them, and to be unable to understand how he

could have been smitten by such vulgar charms. When Twea touched his breast with the slender, pink finger of her little hand, shaking with emotion, as if to recall the remembrance of former familiarities; when Hont-Reché placed before him the draught-board supported by two lions back to back, in order to play a game; when Amense presented him with a lotus-flower with respectful, supplicating grace, he could scarcely refrain from striking them with his sceptre, and his royal eyes flashed with such disdain that the poor women who had ventured on such boldness, withdrew abashed, their eyes wet with tears, and leaned silently against the painted wall, trying by their motionlessness to appear to be part of the paintings on the frescoes.

To avoid these scenes of tears and violence, he had withdrawn to the palace of Thebes, alone, taciturn, and sombre; and there, instead of remaining seated on his throne in the solemn attitude of the gods and of kings, who, being almighty, neither move nor make a gesture, he walked feverishly up and down through the vast halls. Strange was it to see that tall Pharaoh with imposing mien, as formidable as the granite colossi, his like, making the stone floors resound under his curved

sandals. When he passed, the terrified guards seemed to be petrified and to turn to stone. They remained breathless, and not even the double ostrich-feather in their headgear dared tremble. When he had passed, they scarce ventured to whisper, "What is the matter to-day with the Pharaoh?"

Had he returned from his expedition a beaten man, he could not have been more morose and sombre. If, instead of having won ten victories, slain twenty thousand enemies, brought back two thousand virgins chosen from among the fairest, a hundred loads of gold-dust, a thousand loads of ebony and elephants' tusks, without counting the rare products and the strange animals, — if, instead of all this, Pharaoh had seen his army cut to pieces, his war chariots overthrown and broken, if he had escaped alone from the rout under a shower of arrows, dusty, blood-covered, taking the reins from the hands of his driver dead by his side, — he certainly could not have appeared more gloomy and more desperate. After all, the land of Egypt produces soldiers in abundance; innumerable horses neigh and paw the ground in the palace stables; and workmen could soon bend wood, melt copper, sharpen brass. The fortune of war is changeable, but a disaster may

be atoned for. To have, however, wished for a thing which did not at once come to him, to have met with an obstacle between his will and the carrying out of that will, to have hurled like a javelin a desire which had not struck its mark, — that was what amazed the Pharaoh who dwelt in the higher plane of almightiness. For one moment it occurred to him that he was only a man.

So he wandered through the vast courts, down the avenues of giant pillars, passed under the mighty pylons, between the lofty monolithic obelisks and the colossi which gazed upon him with their great, frightened eyes. He traversed the hypostyle hall and the maze of the granitic forest with its one hundred and sixty-two pillars tall and strong as towers. The figures of gods, of kings, and of symbolic beings painted on the walls seemed to fix upon him their great eyes, drawn in black upon their profile masks, the uræus snakes to twist and swell their hoods, the bird-faced divinities to stretch out their necks, the globes to spread over the cornices their fluttering wings of stone. A strange, fantastic life animated these curious figures, and peopled with living swarms the solitudes of the vast hall, which was as large as an ordinary palace. The divin-

ities, the ancestors, the chimerical monsters, eternally motionless, were amazed to see the Pharaoh, ordinarily as calm as themselves, striding up and down as though he were a man of flesh, and not of porphyry and basalt.

Weary of roaming about that mysterious forest of pillars that upbore a granite heaven, like a lion which seeks the track of its prey and scents with its wrinkled nose the moving sand of the desert, the Pharaoh ascended one of the terraces of the palace, stretched himself on a low couch, and sent for Timopht.

Timopht appeared at once, and advanced from the top of the stairs to the Pharaoh, prostrating himself at every step. He dreaded the wrath of the master whose favour he had, for a moment, hoped he had gained. Would the skill he had shown in discovering the home of Tahoser be a sufficient excuse for the crime of losing track of the lovely maid?

Raising one knee and leaving the other bent, Timopht stretched out his arms with a supplicating gesture.

"O King, do not doom me to death or to be beaten beyond measure. The beauteous Tahoser, the daughter of Petamounoph, on whom your desire deigned to descend as the hawk swoops down upon the dove, will doubtless be found; and when, returned to her home,

she sees your magnificent gifts, her heart will be touched, and she will come of herself to take, among the women that dwell in your harem, the place which you will assign to her."

"Did you question her servants and her slaves?" said the King. "The stick loosens the most rebellious tongue, and suffering makes men and women say what they would otherwise hide."

"Nofré and Souhem, her favourite maid and her oldest servant, told me that they had noticed the bolts of the garden gate drawn back, that probably their mistress had gone out that way. The gate opens on the river, and the water does not preserve the track of boats."

"What did the boatmen of the Nile say?"

"They had seen nothing. One man alone said that a poorly dressed woman crossed the stream with the first light of day; but it could not be the beautiful and rich Tahoser, whose face you have yourself noticed, and who walks like a queen in her superb garments."

Timopht's logic did not appear to convince the Pharaoh. He leaned his chin on his hand and reflected for a few moments. Poor Timopht waited

in silence, fearing an explosion of fury. The King's lips moved as if he were speaking to himself.

"That mean dress was a disguise. Yes, it must have been. Thus disguised, she crossed to the other side of the river. Timopht is a fool, who cannot see anything. I have a great mind to have him thrown to the crocodiles or beaten to death. But what could be her reason? A maid of high birth, the daughter of a high-priest, to escape thus from her palace, alone and without informing any one of her intention! It may be there is some love affair at the bottom of this mystery."

As this thought occurred to him, the Pharaoh's face flushed red as if under the reflection of a fire; the blood had rushed from his heart to his face. The redness was followed by dreadful pallor; his eyebrows writhed like the uræus in his diadem, his mouth was contracted, he grated his teeth, and his face became so terrible that the terrified Timopht fell on his face upon the pavement as falls a dead man.

But the Pharaoh resumed his coolness, his face regained its majestic, weary, placid look, and seeing that Timopht did not rise, he kicked him disdainfully.

When Timopht, who already saw himself stretched on the funeral bed supported by jackal's feet in the

Memnonia quarter, his side open, his stomach emptied, and himself ready to be plunged into a bath of pickle, — when Timopht raised himself, he dared not look up to the King, but remained crouched on his heels, a prey to the bitterest anguish.

"Come, Timopht!" said His Majesty, "rise up, run, and despatch emissaries on all sides; have temples, palaces, houses, villas, gardens, yea, the meanest of huts searched, and find Tahoser. Send chariots along every road; have the Nile traversed in every direction by boats; go yourself and ask those whom you meet if they have not seen such and such a woman. Violate the tombs, if she has taken refuge in the abodes of death, far within some passage or hypogeum. Seek her out as Isis sought her husband Osiris torn away by Typhon, and, dead or alive, bring her back, — or by the uræus of my pschent, by the lotus of my sceptre, you shall perish in hideous tortures."

Timopht went off with the speed of a deer to carry out the orders of the Pharaoh, who, somewhat calmer, took one of those poses of tranquil grandeur which the sculptors love to give to the colossi set up at the gates of the temples and palaces, and calm as beseems those

whose sandals, covered with drawings of captives with bound elbows, rest upon the heads of nations, he waited.

A roar as of thunder sounded around the palace, and had the sky not been of unchangeable, lapis-lazuli blue it might have been thought that a storm had burst unexpectedly. The sound was caused by the swiftly revolving wheels of the chariots galloping off in every direction, and shaking the very ground. Soon the Pharaoh perceived from the top of the terrace the boats cleaving the stream under the impulse of the rowers, and his messengers scattering on the other bank through the country. The Libyan chain, with its rosy light, and its sapphire blue shadows, bounded the horizon and formed a background to the giant buildings of Rameses, Amenhôtep, and Amen Phtases; the pylons with their sloping angles, the walls with their spreading cornices, the colossi with their hands resting on their knees, stood out, gilded by the sunbeams, their size undiminished by distance.

But the Pharaoh looked not at these proud edifices. Amid the clumps of palms and the cultivated fields, houses and painted kiosks rose here and there, standing out against the brilliant colours of the vegetation.

Under one of these roofs, on one of these terraces, no doubt, Tahoser was hiding; and by some spell he wished he could raise them or make them transparent.

Hours followed on hours. The sun had sunk behind the mountains, casting its last rays on Thebes, and the messengers had not returned. The Pharaoh preserved his motionless attitude. Night fell on the city, cool, calm, blue; the stars came out and twinkled in the deep azure. On the corner of the terrace the Pharaoh, silent, impassible, stood out dark like a basalt statue fixed upon the entablature. Several times the birds of night swept around his head ere settling on it, but terrified by his deep, slow breathing, they fled with startled wings.

From the height where he sat, the King overlooked the city lying at his feet. Out of the mass of bluish shadow uprose the obelisks with their sharp pyramidions; the pylons, giant doors traversed by rays; high cornices; the colossi rising shoulder-high above the sea of buildings; the propylæa; the pillars, with capitals swelled out like huge granite flowers; the corners of temples and of palaces, brought out by a silvery touch of light. The sacred pools spread out shimmering

like polished metal; the human-headed and the ram-headed sphinxes aligned along the avenues, stretched out their hind-quarters; and the flat roofs were multiplied infinitely, white under the moonlight, in masses cut here and there into great slices by the squares and the streets. Red points studded the darkness as if the stars had let sparks fall upon the earth. These were lamps still burning in the sleeping city. Still farther, between the less crowded buildings, faintly seen shafts of palm trees waved their fans of leaves; and beyond, the contours and the shapes were merged in a vaporous immensity, for even the eagle's glance could not have reached the limits of Thebes; and on the other side old Hopi was flowing majestically towards the sea.

Soaring in sight and thought over that vast city of which he was the absolute master, the Pharaoh reflected sadly on the limits set to human power, and his desire, like a raging vulture, gnawed at his heart. He said to himself: "All these houses contain beings who at the sight of me bow their faces into the dust, to whom my will is the will of the gods. When I pass upon my golden car or in my litter borne by the oëris, virgins feel their bosoms swell as their long, timid

glance follows me; the priests burn incense to me in their censers, the people wave palms and scatter flowers; the whistling of one of my arrows makes the nations tremble; and the walls of pylons huge as precipitous mountains are scarce sufficient to record my victories; the quarries can scarce furnish granite enough for my colossal statues. Yet once, in my superb satiety, I form a wish, and that wish I cannot fulfil. Timopht does not reappear. No doubt he has failed. Oh, Tahoser, Tahoser! How great is the happiness you will have to bestow on me to make up for this long waiting!"

Meanwhile the messengers, Timopht at their head, were visiting the houses, examining the roads, inquiring after the priest's daughter, describing her to the travellers they met; but no one could answer them. The first messenger appeared on the terrace and announced to the Pharaoh that Tahoser could not be found. The Pharaoh stretched out his sceptre, and the messenger fell dead, in spite of the proverbial hardness of the Egyptian skull. A second came up; he stumbled against the body of his comrade stretched on the slabs; he trembled, for he saw that the Pharaoh was angry.

"What of Tahoser?" said the Pharaoh, without changing his attitude.

"O Majesty! all trace of her is lost," replied the poor wretch, kneeling in the darkness before the black shadow, which was more like a statue of Osiris than a living king.

The granite arm was outstretched from the motionless torso, and the metal sceptre fell like a thunderbolt. The second messenger rolled on the ground by the side of the first.

The third shared the same fate.

Timopht, in the course of his search, reached the house of Poëri, who, having returned from his nocturnal excursion, had been amazed that morning at not seeing the sham Hora. Harphre and the servants who, the night before, had supped with her, did not know what had become of her; her room had been found empty; she had been sought for in vain through the gardens, the cellars, the granaries, and the washing-places.

Poëri replied, when questioned by Timopht, that it was true that a young girl had presented herself at his gate in the supplicating posture of misfortune, imploring hospitality on her knees; that he had received her kindly; had offered her food and shelter; but that she

had left in a mysterious fashion for a reason which he could not fathom. In what direction had she gone? That he did not know. No doubt, having rested, she had continued on her way to some unknown place. She was beautiful, sad, wore a garment of common stuff, and appeared to be poor. Did the name of Hora which she had given stand for that of Tahoser? It was for Timopht to answer that question.

Provided with this information, Timopht returned to the palace, and keeping well out of the reach of the Pharaoh's sceptre, he repeated what he had learned.

"What did she go to Poëri's for?" said the Pharaoh to himself. "If Hora is really Tahoser, she loves Poëri. And yet, no! for she would not have fled thus, after having been received under his roof. I shall find her again, even if I have to upset the whole of Egypt from the Cataracts to the Delta."

XI

RA'HEL, who from the threshold of the hut was watching Poëri go away, thought she heard a faint sigh. She listened; some dogs were baying to the moon, an owl uttered its doleful hoot, and the crocodiles moaned between the reeds of the river, imitating the cry of a child in distress. The young Israelite was about to re-enter the hut when a more distinct moan, which could not be attributed to the vague sounds of night, and which certainly came from a human breast, again struck her ear. Fearing some ambush, she drew cautiously near the place whence came the sound, and close to the wall of the hut she perceived in the blue transparent darkness the shape of a body fallen to the ground. The wet drapery outlined the limbs of the false Hora and betrayed her sex.

Ra'hel, seeing that she had to do with a fainting woman only, lost all fear and knelt by her, questioning the breathing of her lips and the beating of her heart; the one was just expiring on the pale lips, the other scarce beat under the cold breasts.

Feeling the water which had soaked the stranger's dress, Ra'hel thought at first that it was blood, and imagined that the woman must be the victim of a murder. In order to help her to better purpose, she called Thamar, her servant, and the two women carried Tahoser into the hut. They laid her upon the couch. Thamar held up a lamp, while Ra'hel, bending over the girl, looked for the wound; but no red streak showed upon the pallor of Tahoser, and her dress had no crimson stain.

They stripped off her wet garment, and cast over her a piece of striped wool, the gentle warmth of which soon restored her suspended circulation. Tahoser slowly opened her eyes and cast around her a terrified glance like that of a captured gazelle. It took her some time to regain control of her thoughts. She could not understand how she happened to be in that room, on the bed, where but a moment ago she had seen Poëri and the young Israelite seated side by side with clasped hands, speaking of love, while she, breathless, amazed, watched through the crack of the wall; but soon memory returned, and with it the feeling of her situation.

The light fell full on Ra'hel's face. Tahoser

studied it silently, grieved to find her so perfectly beautiful. In vain, with all the fierceness of feminine jealousy, she tried to note defects in her; she felt herself not vanquished, but equalled; Ra'hel was the Hebrew ideal, as Tahoser was the Egyptian. Hard though it was to her loving heart, she was compelled to admit that Poëri's love was justified and well bestowed. The eyes with their full black eyelashes, the beautiful nose, the red mouth with its dazzling smile, the long, elegant oval face, the arms, full near the shoulders and ending in childish hands, the round, plump neck which, as it turned, formed folds more beautiful than necklaces of gems,—all this, set off by a quaint, exotic dress, was sure to please.

"I made a great mistake," said Tahoser to herself, "when I presented myself to Poëri in the humble attitude of a suppliant, trusting to my charms overpraised by flatterers. Fool that I was! I acted as a soldier who should go to war without breastplate or weapons. If I had appeared in all my splendour, covered with jewels and enamels, standing on my golden car followed by my numerous slaves, I might perhaps have touched his fancy, if not his heart."

"How do you feel now?" said Ra'hel in Egyptian to Tahoser; for by the outline of the face and the dressing of the hair, she had perceived that the maiden did not belong to the Israelitish race. The sound of her voice was sympathetic and sweet, and the foreign accent added greater grace to it.

Tahoser was touched in spite of herself, and replied, "I feel better. Your kind care will soon have restored me."

"Do not tire yourself with speaking," answered the Israelite, placing her hand on Tahoser's lips. "Try to sleep, to regain your strength. Thamar and I will watch over you."

Her agitation, the swim across the Nile, the long walk through the poor quarters of Thebes, had wearied out Petamounoph's daughter; her delicate frame was exhausted, and soon her long lashes closed, forming a dark semicircle upon her cheeks flushed with fever. Sleep came to her, but broken, restless, distorted by strange dreams, troubled by threatening hallucinations; nervous shivers made the sleeper start, and broken words, replying to the dream dialogue, were spoken by the half-opened lips.

Seated at the bed head, Ra'hel followed the changes

in the features of Tahoser; troubled when she saw them contract and fill with grief, quieted again when the girl calmed down. Thamar, crouching beside her mistress, was also watching the priest's daughter, but her face expressed less kindliness. Coarse instincts showed in the wrinkles of her brow, pressed down by the broad band of the Hebrew head-dress; her eyes, still bright in spite of her age, sparkled with curious questionings in their brown and wrinkled orbits; her bony nose, shining and curved like a vulture's beak, seemed to scent out secrets; and her lips, slightly moving, appeared to be framing interrogations.

She was very much concerned about this stranger picked up at the door of the hut. Whence came she? How did she happen to be there? What was her purpose? Who could she be? Such were the questions which Thamar asked herself, and to which, very regretfully, she could find no satisfactory replies. Besides, Thamar, like all old women, was prejudiced against beauty, and in this repect Tahoser proved very unpleasant to her. The faithful servant forgave beauty in her mistress only; for her good looks she considered as her property, and she was proud and jealous of them.

Seeing that Ra'hel kept silence, the old woman rose and sat down near her, and winking her eyes, the brown lids of which rose and fell like a bat's wing, she whispered in the Hebrew tongue, "Mistress, nothing good will come of this woman."

"Why do you think so, Thamar?" answered Ra'hel, in the same low tone and using the same language.

"It is strange," went on the suspicious Thamar, "that she should have fainted there, and not elsewhere."

"She fell at the spot where weakness came upon her."

The old woman shook her head doubtfully.

"Do you suppose," said Poëri's beloved, "that her faint was simulated? The dissector might have cut her side with his sharp stone, so like a dead body did she seem. Her dull eyes, her pale lips, her pallid cheeks, her limp limbs, her skin as cold as that of the dead, — these things cannot be counterfeited."

"No, doubtless," replied Thamar, "although there are women clever enough to feign all these symptoms, for some reason or another, so skilfully as to deceive the most clear-sighted. I believe that the maiden had swooned, as a matter of fact."

"Then what are you suspicious of?"

"How did she happen to be there in the middle of the night; in this distant quarter inhabited only by the poor captives of our tribe whom the cruel Pharaoh employs in making brick, and to whom he refuses the straw necessary to burn the bricks? What motive brought that Egyptian woman to our wretched huts? Why was her garment soaking wet, as if she had just emerged from a pool or from the river?"

"I know no more than you do," replied Ra'hel.

"Suppose she were a spy of our masters'," said the old woman, whose fierce eyes were lighted up with hatred. "Great events are preparing, — who knows whether the alarm has not been given?"

"How could that young girl, ill as she is, hurt us? She is in our hands, weak, alone, ill. Besides, we can, at the least suspicious sign, keep her prisoner until the day of deliverance."

"In any case, she is not to be trusted. See how delicate and soft are her hands!"

And old Thamar raised one of the arms of the sleeping Tahoser.

"In what respect can the fineness of her skin endanger us?"

"Oh, imprudent youth!" said Thamar; "oh, mad youth! which cannot see anything, which walks through life trustfully, without believing in ambushes, in brambles under the grass, in hot coals under the ashes, and which would gladly caress a viper, believing it to be only a snake. Open your eyes! That woman does not belong to the class of which she seems to be; her thumb has never been flattened on the thread of the spindle, and that little hand, softened by essences and pomades, has never worked. Her poverty is a disguise."

Thamar's words appeared to impress Ra'hel; she examined Tahoser more attentively. The lamp shed upon her its trembling rays, and the delicate form of the priest's daughter showed in the yellow light relaxed in sleep. The arm which Thamar had raised still rested upon the mantle of striped wool, showing whiter by contrast with the dark stuff; the wrist was circled with a bracelet of sandal wood, the commonplace adornment of the coquetry of poverty; but if the ornament was rude and roughly chased, the flesh it covered seemed to have been washed in the perfumed bath of riches. Then Ra'hel saw how beautiful was Tahoser, but the discovery excited no evil feeling in

her heart; Tahoser's beauty softened, instead of irritating her as it did Thamar; she could not believe that such perfection concealed a vile and perfidious soul; and in this respect her youthful candour judged more correctly than the long experience of her maid.

Day at last dawned, and Tahoser's fever grew worse. She was delirious at times, and then would fall into a prolonged slumber.

"If she were to die here," said Thamar, "we should be accused of having killed her."

"She will not die," replied Ra'hel, putting a cup of cool water to the lips of the sick girl.

"If she does, I shall throw her body by night into the Nile," continued the obstinate Thamar, "and the crocodiles will undertake to make it disappear."

The day passed, the night came, and at the accustomed hour Poëri, having given the usual signal, appeared as he had done the night before on the threshold of the hut.

Ra'hel came to meet him, her finger on her lips, and signed to him to keep silence and to speak low, for Tahoser was sleeping. Poëri, whom Ra'hel led by the hand to the bed on which Tahoser rested, at once recognised the sham Hora, whose disappearance had

preoccupied him a good deal, especially since the visit of Timopht, who was looking for her in his master's name.

Marked astonishment showed in his face as he rose, after having bent over the bed to make quite certain that the young girl who lay there was the one whom he had welcomed, for he could not understand how she happened to be in this place. His look of surprise smote Ra'hel to the heart. She stood in front of Poëri to read the truth in his eyes, placed her hands upon his shoulders, and fixing her glance upon him, said, in a dry, sharp voice which contrasted with her speech, usually as gentle as the cooing of a dove, —

"So you know her?"

Thamar grinned with satisfaction; she was proud of her perspicacity, and almost glad to see her suspicions as regarded the stranger partially justified.

"Yes," replied Poëri, quietly.

The bright eyes of the old woman sparkled with malicious curiosity.

Ra'hel's face resumed its expression of trustfulness; she no longer doubted her lover.

Poëri told her that a girl calling herself Hora had presented herself at his home as a suppliant; that he

had received her as any guest should be received; that the next day she had disappeared from among the maids, and that he could not understand how she happened to be there. He also added that the emissaries of the Pharaoh were everywhere looking for Tahoser, the daughter of the high-priest Petamounoph, who had disappeared from her palace.

"You see that I was right, mistress," said Thamar, triumphantly. "Hora and Tahoser are one and the same person."

"That may be," replied Poëri, "but there are a number of difficulties which my reason does not explain. First, why should Tahoser, if it is she, don this disguise? Next, by what miracle do I meet here the maiden whom I left last night on the other bank of the Nile, and who certainly could not know whither I was going?"

"No doubt she followed you," said Ra'hel.

"I am quite sure that at that time there was no other boat on the river but mine."

"That is the reason her hair was so dripping-wet and her garments soaked. She must have swum across the Nile."

"That may well be, — I thought for a moment that

I had caught sight in the darkness of a human head above the waters."

"It was she, poor child!" said Ra'hel; "her fatigue and her fainting corroborate it, for after your departure I picked her up stretched senseless outside the hut."

"No doubt that is the way things occurred," said the young man. "I can see the acts, but I cannot understand the motive."

"Let me explain it," said Ra'hel, smiling, "although I am but a poor, ignorant woman, and you are compared, as regards your vast knowledge, to the priests of Egypt who study night and day within sanctuaries covered with mystic hieroglyphs, the hidden meaning of which they alone can penetrate. But sometimes men, who are so busy with astronomy, music, and numbers, do not guess what goes on in a maiden's heart. They can see a distant star in the heavens; they do not notice a love close to them. Hora — or rather, Tahoser, for it is she — took this disguise to penetrate into your house and to live near you; jealous, she glided in the shadow behind you; at the risk of being devoured by the crocodiles in the river she swam across the Nile. On arriving here she watched us

through some crack in the wall, and was unable to bear the sight of our happiness. She loves you because you are very handsome, very strong, and very gentle. But I do not care, since you do not love her. Now do you understand ? "

A faint blush coloured Poëri's cheeks; he feared lest Ra'hel were angry and spoke thus to entrap him, but her clear, pure glance betrayed no hidden thought. She was not angry with Tahoser for loving the man whom she loved herself.

In her dreams Tahoser saw Poëri standing by her; ecstatic joy lighted up her features, and half raising herself, she seized the hand of the young man to bear it to her lips.

"Her lips are burning," said Poëri, withdrawing his hand.

"With love as much as with fever," replied Ra'hel, "but she is really ill. Suppose Thamar were to fetch Mosche. He is wiser than the wise men and the wizards of Pharaoh, every one of whose wonders he imitates. He knows the secret properties of plants, and makes drinks of them which would bring the dead to life. He shall cure Tahoser, for I am not cruel enough to wish her to lose her life."

Thamar went off grumbling, and soon returned, followed by a very tall old man, whose majestic aspect inspired reverence. A long white beard fell down over his breast, and on either side of his brow two huge protuberances caught and retained the light. They looked like two horns or two beams. Under his thick eyebrows his eyes shone like fire. He looked, in spite of his simple dress, like a prophet or a god.

Acquainted with the state of things by Poëri, he sat down by Tahoser's couch, and said, as he stretched his hand over her: "In the name of the Mighty One beside whom all other gods are idols and demons, — though you do not belong to the elect of the Lord, — maiden, be cured!"

XII

THE tall old man withdrew solemnly, leaving, as it were, a trail of light behind him. Tahoser, surprised at feeling her sickness suddenly leave her, cast her eyes around the room, and soon, wrapping herself in the blanket with which the young Israelite had covered her, she put her feet to the ground and sat up on the edge of the bed. Fatigue and fever had completely left her; she was as fresh as after a long rest, and her beauty shone in all its purity. Pushing back with her little hands the plaited masses of her hair behind her ears, she showed her face lighted up with love, as if she desired Poëri to read it; but seeing that he remained motionless near Ra'hel without encouraging her by a sign or a glance, she rose slowly, drew near the young Israelite girl, and threw her arms around her neck. She remained thus, her head in Ra'hel's bosom, wetting it with her hot tears. Sometimes a sob she could not repress shook her convulsively upon her rival's breast.

The complete yielding up of herself, and her evident misery, touched Ra'hel. Tahoser confessed herself

beaten, and implored her pity by mute supplication, appealing to her womanly generosity.

Ra'hel, much moved, kissed her and said, —

"Dry your tears and be not so sorrowful. You love Poëri? Well, love him, and I shall not be jealous. Yacoub, a patriarch of our race, had two wives; one was called Ra'hel as I am, and the other Leah. Yacoub preferred Ra'hel, and yet Leah, who was not beautiful like you, lived happily with him."

Tahoser knelt at Ra'hel's feet and kissed her hand. Ra'hel raised her and put her arm around her waist. They formed a charming group, these two women of different races, exhibiting, as they did, the characteristic beauty of each: Tahoser elegant, graceful, and slender, like a child that has grown too fast; Ra'hel dazzling, blooming, and superb in her precocious maturity.

"Tahoser," said Poëri, "for that is your name, I think, — Tahoser, daughter of the high-priest Petamounoph?"

The young girl nodded assent.

"How is it that you, who live in Thebes in a rich palace, surrounded by slaves, and whom the handsomest among the Egyptians desire, — how is it you have chosen to love me, a son of a race reduced to slavery,

a stranger who does not share your religious beliefs and who is separated from you by so great a distance?"

Ra'hel and Tahoser smiled, and the high-priest's daughter replied, —

"That is the very reason."

"Although I enjoy the favour of the Pharaoh, although I am the steward of his domains and wear gilded horns in the festivals of agriculture, I cannot rise to you. In the eyes of the Egyptians I am but a slave, and you belong to the priestly caste, the highest and most venerated. If you love me — and I cannot doubt that you do — you must give up your rank."

"Have I not already become your servant? Hora kept nothing of Tahoser, not even the enamelled collars and the transparent gauze calasiris; that is why you thought me ugly."

"You will have to give up your country and follow me to unknown regions, through the desert where burns the sun, where blows the fire-wind, where the moving sand tangles and effaces the paths, where no tree grows, where no well springs, through the lost valleys of death strewn with whitened bones that mark the way."

"I shall go," said Tahoser, quietly.

"That is not all," continued Poëri. "Your gods are not mine, — your gods of brass, basalt, and granite, fashioned by the hand of man, your monstrous idols with heads of eagle, monkey, ibis, cow, jackal, and lion, which assume the faces of beasts as if they were troubled by the human face on which rests the reflection of Jehovah. It is said, 'Thou shalt worship neither stone nor wood nor metal.' Within these temples cemented with the blood of oppressed races grin and crouch the hideous, foul demons which usurp the libations, the offerings, and the sacrifices. One only God, infinite, eternal, formless, colourless, fills the immensity of the heavens which you people with a multitude of phantoms. Our God has created us; you have created your gods."

Although Tahoser was deeply in love with Poëri, his words affected her strangely, and she drew back in terror. The daughter of the high-priest had been brought up to venerate the gods whom the young Hebrew was boldly blaspheming; she had offered up on their altars bouquets of flowers, and she had burned perfumes before their impassible images; amazed and delighted, she had walked through their temples splendid with brilliant paintings. She had seen her father

performing the mysterious rites; she had followed the procession of priests who bore the symbolic bari through the enormous pylons and the endless sphinx avenues; she had admired tremblingly the psychostasis where the trembling soul appears before Osiris armed with the whip and the pedum, and she had noted with a dreamy glance the frescoes representing the emblematic figures travelling towards the regions of the West. She could not thus yield up all her beliefs. She was silent for a few moments, hesitating between religion and love. Love won the day, and she said:

"You shall tell me of your God; I will try to understand him."

"It is well," said Poëri; "you shall be my wife. Meanwhile remain here, for the Pharaoh, no doubt in love with you, is having you sought everywhere by his emissaries. He will never discover you under this humble roof, and in a few days we shall be out of his power. But the night is waning and I must depart."

Poëri went off, and the two young women, lying side by side on the soft bed, soon fell asleep, holding each other's hands like two sisters.

Thamar, who during the foregoing scene had remained crouched in her corner of the room, looking

like a bat hanging from a corner by its talons, and had been muttering broken words and frowning, now unfolded her bony limbs, rose to her feet, and bending over the bed, listened to the breathing of the two sleepers. When the regularity of their breathing convinced her that they were sound asleep, she went towards the door, walking with infinite precaution. Once outside, she sprang with swift steps in the direction of the Nile, shaking off the dogs who hung on with their teeth at the edge of her tunic, or dragging them through the dust until they let go; or she glared at them with such fierce eyes that they drew back with frightened yelps and let her pass by.

She had soon passed the dangerous and deserted places inhabited at night by the members of the thieves' association, and entered the wealthy quarter of Thebes. Three or four streets bordered with tall buildings, the shadows of which fell in great angles, led her to the outer wall of the palace, which was the object of her trip. The difficulty was to enter, — no easy matter at that time of the night for an old Hebrew servant with dusty feet and shabby garments.

She went to the main pylon, before which watched, stretched at length, fifty ram-headed sphinxes, arranged

in two lines like monsters ready to crush between their granite jaws the imprudent ones who should attempt to force a passage. The sentinels stopped her, struck her roughly with the shafts of their javelins, and then asked her what she wished.

"I want to see the Pharaoh," replied the old woman, rubbing her back.

"That 's right, — very nice! Waken for this witch the Pharaoh, favourite of Phré, beloved of Ammon Ra, the destroyer of nations!" said the soldiers, laughing loudly.

Thamar repeated obstinately, "I want to see the Pharaoh at once."

"A very good time you have chosen for it! The Pharaoh slew but a short time ago three messengers with a blow of his sceptre. He sits on his terrace, motionless and sinister like Typhon, the god of evil," said a soldier who condescended to give this explanation.

Ra'hel's maid endeavoured to force her way through; the javelins rattled on her head like hammers on an anvil. She began to yell like a bird plucked alive.

An officer came out on hearing the tumult; the soldiers stopped beating Thamar.

"What does this woman want?" said the officer, "and why are you beating her in this way?"

"I want to see the Pharaoh," cried Thamar, dragging herself to the knees of the officer.

"Out of the question," replied the latter; "it is out of the question, — even if, instead of being a low wretch, you were one of the greatest personages in the kingdom."

"I know where is Tahoser," whispered the old woman in his ear, laying stress on each syllable.

On hearing this, the officer took Thamar by the hand, led her through the first pylon and through the avenue of pillars and the hypostyle hall into a second court, where rose the granite sanctuary, with its two outer columns with lotus capitals. There, calling Timopht, he handed Thamar over to him.

Timopht led the servant to the terrace where sat the Pharaoh, gloomy and silent.

"Keep well out of the reach of his sceptre," was the advice Timopht gave to the Israelite.

As soon as she perceived the King through the darkness, Thamar threw herself with her face to the stone flags, by the side of the bodies which had not yet been removed, and then sitting up, she said in a

firm voice, "O Pharaoh, do not slay me, I bring you good news."

"Speak without fear," replied the King, whose fury had passed away.

"Tahoser, whom your messengers have sought in the four corners of the world, — I know where she is."

At the name of Tahoser, Pharaoh rose as if moved by a spring and stepped towards Thamar, who was still kneeling.

"If you speak the truth, you may take from my granite halls as much as you can lift of gold and precious stones."

"I will put her in your hands, you may be sure," said the old woman, with a strident laugh.

What was the motive which had led Thamar to inform the Pharaoh of the retreat where the priest's daughter was in hiding?

She wished to prevent a union which she disliked. She entertained towards the race of Egypt, a blind, fierce, unreasoning, almost bestial hatred, and the thought of breaking Tahoser's heart delighted her. Once in the hands of the Pharaoh, Ra'hel's rival would be unable to escape; the granite walls of the palace would keep their prey.

"Where is she?" said Pharaoh; "tell me the spot. I want to see her at once."

"Your Majesty, I alone can guide you. I know the windings of those loathsome quarters, where the humblest of your servants would disdain to set foot Tahoser is there, in a clay and straw hut which nothing marks from the huts which surround it, amid the heaps of bricks which the Hebrews make for you outside the regular dwellings of the city."

"Very well, I will trust you. Timopht, have a chariot brought around."

Timopht disappeared. Soon the wheels were heard rolling over the stones of the court, and the horses stamping and pawing as the equerries fastened them to the yoke.

The Pharaoh came down, followed by Thamar. He sprang up on the chariot, took the reins, and seeing that Thamar hesitated, —

"Come, get up," he said.

He clucked his tongue, and the horses started. The awakened echoes gave back the sound of the wheels, which sounded like low thunder through the vast halls, in the midst of the night silence. The hideous old woman, clinging with her bony fingers to the rim of

the chariot by the side of the godlike Pharaoh, presented a strange sight, which fortunately was seen by none but the stars twinkling in the deep blue heavens. She resembled one of the evil genii of mysterious face which accompany the guilty souls to Hades.

"Is this the way?" said the Pharaoh to the woman at the forks of a street.

"Yes," replied Thamar, stretching her withered hand in the right direction.

The horses, urged on by the whip, sprang forward, and the chariot leaped upon the stones with a noise of brass.

Meanwhile Tahoser slept by the side of Ra'hel. A strange dream filled her sleep. She seemed to be in a temple of immense size. Huge columns of prodigious height upbore the blue ceiling studded with stars like the heavens; innumerable lines of hieroglyphs ascended and descended along the walls between the panels of symbolic frescoes painted in bright colours. All the gods of Egypt had met in this universal sanctuary, not as brass, basalt, or porphyry effigies, but as living shapes. In the first rank were seated the gods Knef, Buto, Phtah, Pan-Mendes, Hathor, Phré, Isis; then came the twelve celestial gods, — six male gods: Rem-

pha, Pi-Zeous, Ertosi, Pi-Hermes, Imuthi; and six female deities: the Moon, Ether, Fire, Air, Water, Earth. Behind these swarmed vaguely and indistinctly three hundred and sixty-five Decans, the familiar dæmons of each day. Next appeared the terrestrial deities: the second Osiris, Haroeri, Typhon, the second Isis, Nephthys, the dog-headed Anubis, Thoth, Busiris, Bubastis, the great Serapis. Beyond, in the shade, were faintly seen idols in form of animals, — oxen, crocodiles, ibises, hippopotami. In the centre of the temple, in his open mummy-case, lay the high-priest Petamounoph, who, the bandages having been unwound from his face, gazed with an ironical air at that strange and mysterious assembly. He was dead, not living, and spoke, as it often happens in dreams; and he said to his daughter, "Question them and ask them if they are gods."

And Tahoser proceeded to put to each one that question, and each and all replied: "We are only numbers, laws, forces, attributes, effluvia, and thoughts of God, but not one of us is the true God."

Then Poëri appeared on the threshold of the temple, and took Tahoser by the hand and led her to a light so brilliant that in comparison with it the sun would have

seemed black, and in the centre of which blazed in a triangle words unknown to her.

Meanwhile Pharaoh's chariot flew over all obstacles, and the axles of the wheels rayed the walls in the narrow lanes.

"Pull in your horses," said Thamar to the Pharaoh; "the noise of the wheels in this solitude and silence might startle the fugitive, and she would again escape you."

The Pharaoh thought this advice sound, and in spite of his impatience made his horses slacken their impetuous pace.

"There is the place," said Thamar; "I left the door open. Go in. I shall look after the horses."

The king descended from the chariot, and bowing his head, entered the hut. The lamp was still burning, and shed its dying beams on the two sleeping girls. The Pharaoh caught up Tahoser in his strong arms and walked towards the door of the hut.

When the priest's daughter awoke, and saw flaming near her face the shining face of the Pharaoh, she thought at first that it was one of the fancies of her dream transformed; but the air of night which struck her face soon restored her to the sense of reality.

Mad with terror, she tried to scream, to call for help; the cry remained in her throat, — and then, who would have helped her against the Pharaoh?

With one bound the King sprang on to his chariot, threw the reins around his back, and pressing to his breast the half-dead Tahoser, sent his coursers at their top speed towards the Northern Palace.

Thamar glided like a serpent into the hut, crouched down in her accustomed place, and gazed with a look almost as tender as a mother's on her dear Ra'hel, who was still sound asleep.

XIII

THE draught of cold air, due to the speed of the chariot, soon made Tahoser recover from her faint. Pressed and crushed against the breast of the Pharaoh, by his two stony arms, her heart had scarce room to beat, and the hard enamelled collars were making their mark on her heaving bosom. The horses, whose reins the King slackened by bending towards the front of the car, rushed furiously forward, the wheels went round like whirlwinds, the brazen plates justled, the heated axles smoked. Tahoser, terrified, saw vaguely, as in a dream, flash to the right and left vast masses of buildings, clumps of trees, palaces, temples, pylons, obelisks, colossi, which the night made more fantastic and terrible. What were the thoughts that filled her mind during that mad rush? She thought as little as thinks a dove, fluttering in the talons of a hawk which is carrying it away to its eyrie. Mute terror stupefied her, made her blood run cold and dulled her feelings. Her limbs hung limp; her will was relaxed like her muscles, and, had she not been held firmly in the

arms of the Pharaoh, she would have slipped and fallen in a heap on the bottom of the chariot like a piece of stuff which is let drop. Twice she thought she felt upon her cheek a burning breath and two lips of fire; she did not attempt to turn away her head, terror had killed modesty in her. When the chariot struck violently against a stone, a dim instinct of self-preservation made her cling with her hands to the shoulder of the King and press closer to him; then she let herself go again and leaned with her whole weight, light though it was, upon those arms which held her.

The chariot entered the avenue of sphinxes, at the end of which rose a giant pylon crowned with a cornice on which the symbolic globe displayed its wings; the lessening darkness allowed the priest's daughter to recognise the King's palace. Then despair filled her heart; she struggled, she strove to free herself from the embrace which held her close; she pressed her frail hands against the stony breast of the Pharaoh, stiffened out her arms, throwing herself back over the edge of the chariot. Her efforts were useless, her struggles were vain. Her ravisher brought her back to his breast with an irresistible, slow pressure, as if he would

have driven her into it. She tried to scream; her lips were closed with a kiss.

Meanwhile the horses in three or four strides reached the pylon, under which they passed at full gallop, glad to return to the stable, and the chariot rolled into the vast court. The servants hastened up and sprang to the heads of the horses, whose bits were white with foam.

Tahoser cast a terrified glance around her. High brick walls formed a vast square enclosure in which rose on the east a palace, on the west a temple, between two great pools, the piscinæ of the sacred crocodiles. The first rays of the sun, the orb of which was already rising behind the Arabian mountains, flushed with rosy light the top of the buildings, the lower portions of which were still plunged in bluish shadows.

There was no hope of flight. The buildings, though in no wise gloomy, had a look of irresistible strength, of absolute will, of eternal persistence: a world catastrophe alone could have opened an issue through these thick walls, through these piles of hard sandstone. To overthrow the pylons built of fragments of mountains, the earth itself would have had to quake; even a con-

flagration could only have licked with its fiery tongues those indestructible blocks.

Poor Tahoser did not have at her command such violent means, and she was compelled to allow herself to be carried like a child by the Pharaoh, who had sprung from his chariot.

Four high columns with palm-leaf capitals formed the propylæum of the palace into which the king entered, still pressing to his breast the daughter of Petamounoph. When he had passed through the door, he gently placed his burden on the ground, and seeing Tahoser stagger, he said to her: "Be reassured. You rule the Pharaoh, and the Pharaoh rules the world."

These were the first words he had spoken to her.

If love followed the dictates of reason, Tahoser would certainly have preferred the Pharaoh to Poëri. The King was endowed with supreme beauty. His great, clean, regular features seemed to be chiselled, and not the slightest imperfection could be detected in them. The habit of command had given to his glance that penetrating gleam which makes divinities and kings so easily recognisable. His lips, one word from which would have changed the face of the world and the fate of nations, were of a purple red, like fresh blood upon

the blade of a sword, and when he smiled, they possessed that grace of terrible things which nothing can resist. His tall, well proportioned, majestic figure presented the nobility of form admired in the temple statues; and when he appeared solemn and radiant, covered with gold, enamels, and gems, in the midst of the bluish vapour of the censers, he did not seem to belong to that frail race which from generation to generation falls like leaves, and is stretched, sticky with bitumen, in the dark depths of the mummy pits.

What was poor Poëri by the side of this demigod? Nevertheless, Tahoser loved him.

The wise have long since given up attempting to explain the heart of woman. They are masters of astronomy, astrology, and arithmetic; they know the origin of the world, and can tell where were the planets at the very moment of creation; they are sure that the moon was then in the constellation of Cancer, the sun in that of the Lion, Mercury in that of the Virgin, Venus in the Balance, Mars in the Scorpion, Jupiter in Sagittarius, Saturn in Capricorn; they trace on papyrus or granite the direction of the celestial ocean, which goes from the east to the west; they have summed up the number of stars strewn over the blue robe of the

Goddess Neith, and make the sun travel in the lower or the superior hemisphere with the twelve diurnal and the twelve nocturnal baris under the conduct of the hawk-headed pilot and of Neb Wa, the Lady of the Bark; they know that in the second half of the month of Tobi, Orion influences the left ear, and Sirius the heart; but they are absolutely ignorant why a woman prefers one man to another, a wretched Israelite to an illustrious Pharaoh.

After having traversed several halls with Tahoser, whom he led by the hand, the King sat down on a seat in the shape of a throne in a superbly decorated room.

Golden stars gleamed in the blue ceiling, and against the pillars which supported the cornice were placed the statues of kings wearing the pschent, their legs merging into the block of stone and their arms crossed on their chest, looking into the room with frightful intensity out of their black-lined eyes. Between every two pillars burned a lamp placed upon a pedestal, and on the base of the walls was represented a sort of ethnographic procession: the nations of the four quarters of the world were represented there with their particular faces and their particular dress.

At the head of the series, guided by Horus the shepherd of the nations, walked the man of men, the Egyptian, the *Rot'en'no* with a gentle face, slightly aquiline nose, plaited hair, and his dark red skin brought out by the whiteness of the loin-cloth; next came the negro or Nahasi, with his black skin, thick lips, protruding cheekbones and woolly hair; then the Asiatic or Namou, with yellow flesh-colour, strongly aquiline nose, thick black beard cut to a point, wearing a striped skirt fringed with tufts; then the European or Tamhou, the least civilised of all, differing from the others by his white complexion, his red beard and hair, his blue eyes, an undressed ox-skin cast over his shoulder, and his arms and legs tattooed. The other panels were filled with various subjects, scenes of war and triumph and hieroglyphic inscriptions.

In the centre of the room, on a table supported by prisoners bound by the elbows, so skilfully carved that they seemed to live and suffer, bloomed a vast bouquet of flowers whose sweet scent perfumed the atmosphere.

So in this vast hall, surrounded by the effigies of his ancestors, all things spoke and sang of the glory of the Pharaoh. The nations of the world walked behind

Egypt and acknowledged her supremacy, and he governed Egypt. Yet the daughter of Petamounoph, far from being dazzled by this splendour, thought of the rustic villa, of Poëri, and especially of the mean hut of mud and straw in the Hebrew quarter, where she had left Ra'hel, — Ra'hel, from henceforward the happy and only spouse of the young Hebrew.

The Pharaoh held the tips of the fingers of Tahoser, who stood before him, and he fixed upon her his hawk eyes, the eyelids of which never moved. The young girl had no other garment than the drapery substituted by Ra'hel for the dress which had been soaked during the swim across the Nile, but her beauty was in no wise impaired. She remained thus, half nude, holding with one hand the coarse stuff which slipped, and the whole upper portion of her beautiful body appeared in its golden fairness. When she was adorned with her jewels, one was tempted to regret that any part of her form should be concealed by her necklaces, her bracelets, and her belts of gold or of gems; but on seeing her thus devoid of all ornament, admiration was satisfied, or rather exalted. Certainly many very beautiful women had entered the Pharaoh's harem, but not one of them comparable to Tahoser; and the eyes of the

King flashed such burning glances that, unable to bear their brilliancy, she was obliged to cast down her eyes.

In her heart, Tahoser was proud of having excited love in the Pharaoh; for who is the woman, however perfect she may be, who has not some vanity. Yet she would have preferred to follow the young Hebrew into the desert. The King terrified her, she felt herself dazzled by the splendour of his face, and her limbs gave way under her.

The Pharaoh noticed her emotion, and made her sit down at his feet on a red cushion adorned with tufts.

"Oh, Tahoser," he said, kissing her hair, "I love you. When I saw you from the top of my triumphal palanquin, borne higher than the heads of men by the generals, an unknown feeling entered into my soul. I, whose every desire is forestalled, desired something; I understood that I was not everything. Until then I had lived solitary in my almightiness, in the depths of my vast palaces, surrounded by mere shadows which called themselves women, and who had no more effect upon me than the painted figures in the frescoes. I heard in the distance, muttering and complaining low, the nations upon whose heads I wipe my sandals or

which I lift by their hair, as I am represented doing on the symbolical *bassi-relievi* of the palaces, and in my cold breast, as strong as that of a basalt god, I never heard the beat of my own heart. It seemed to me that there was nowhere on earth a being like myself, a being who could move me. In vain I brought back from my expeditions into foreign lands choice virgins and women famous for their beauty in their own country; I cast them aside like flowers, after having breathed their scent for a moment. None inspired me with a desire to see her again. When they were present, I scarce glanced at them; when they were absent, I immediately forgot them. Twea, Taia, Amense, Hont-Reché, whom I have kept to avoid the disgust of having to find others who the next day would have been as indifferent as themselves, have never been, when in my arms, aught but vain phantoms, perfumed and graceful forms, beings of another race with whom my nature could not mingle any more than the leopard can mate with the gazelle, the dweller in the air with the dweller in the waters. I had come to think that, placed by the gods apart from and above all mortals, I was never to share either their pains or their joys. Fearful weariness, like that which no doubt tires the

mummies, who, wrapped up in their bands, wait in their caves in the depths of the hypogea until the soul shall have finished the cycle of migrations, — a fearful weariness had fallen upon me on my throne; for I often remained with my hands on my knees like a granite colossus, thinking of the impossible, the infinite, the eternal. How many a time have I thought of raising the veil of Isis, at the risk of falling blasted at the feet of the goddess. Perhaps, I said to myself, that mysterious face is the one I have been dreaming of, the one which is to inspire me with love. If earth refuses me happiness, I shall climb to heaven. But I saw you; I felt a strange, unaccustomed sensation; I understood that there existed outside myself a being necessary, imperious, and fatal to me, whom I could not live without, and who possessed the power of making me unhappy. I was a king, almost a god, and you, O Tahoser, have made of me a man."

Never, perhaps, had the Pharaoh uttered so long a speech; usually a word, a gesture, a motion of the eye sufficed to manifest his will, which was immediately divined by a thousand attentive, restless eyes; performance followed his thought, as the lightning

follows the thunder-clap. But with desire he seemed to have given up his granitic majesty; he spoke and explained himself like a mortal.

Tahoser was a prey to singular emotion. However much she felt the honour of having inspired love in the man preferred of Phré, in the favoured of Ammon Ra, the destroyer of nations, in the terrifying, solemn and superb being upon whom she scarce dared to gaze, she felt no sympathy for him, and the idea of belonging to him filled her with terror and repulsion. To the Pharaoh who had carried off her body she could not give her soul, which had remained with Poëri and Ra'hel; and as the King appeared to await a reply, she said,—

"How is it, O King, that amid all the maids of Egypt your glance should have fallen on me,—on me whom so many others surpass in beauty, in talent, in gifts of all sorts? How is it that in the midst of clumps of white, blue, and rose lotus, with open corollas, with delicate scent, you have chosen the modest blade of grass which nothing marks?"

"I know not, but I know that you alone exist in this world for me, and that I shall make kings' daughters your servants."

"But suppose I do not love you?" said Tahoser, timidly.

"What care I, if I love you," replied the Pharaoh. "Have not the most beautiful women in the world thrown themselves down upon my threshold weeping and moaning, tearing their cheeks, beating their breasts, plucking out their hair, and have they not died imploring a glance of love which never fell upon them? Never has passion in any one made my heart of brass beat within my stony breast. Resist me, hate if you will, — you will only be more charming; for the first time an obstacle will have come in the way of my will, and I shall know how to overcome it."

"But suppose I love another?" continued Tahoser, more boldly.

At this suggestion the eyebrows of the Pharaoh were bent; he violently bit his lower lip, in which his teeth left white marks, and he pressed to the point of hurting her the fingers of the maid which he still held. Then he cooled down again, and said in a low, deep voice, —

"When you shall have lived in this palace, in the midst of these splendours, surrounded by the atmos-

phere of my love, you will forget everything as does he who eats nepenthe. Your past life will appear to you like a dream, your former feelings will vanish as incense upon the coals of the censer. The woman who is loved by the King no longer remembers men. Go, come; accustom yourself to Pharaonic magnificence; help yourself as you please to my treasures; make gold flow, heap up gems; order, make, unmake, raise, destroy; be my mistress, my wife, my queen. I give you Egypt with its priests, its armies, its toilers, its numberless population, its palaces, its temples and cities. Crumple it up as you would crumple up gauze, — I will win other kingdoms for you, larger, fairer, and richer. If the world is not sufficient, I will conquer planets for you, I will dethrone the gods. You are she whom I love; Tahoser, the daughter of Petamounoph is no more."

XIV

WHEN Ra'hel awoke, she was amazed not to find Tahoser by her side, and cast her glance around the room, thinking the Egyptian had already risen. Crouching in a corner, her arms crossed on her knees, her head upon her arms, which formed a bony pillow, Thamar slept,—or rather, pretended to sleep; for through the long locks of her disordered hair which fell to the ground, might have been seen her eyes as yellow as those of an owl, gleaming with malicious joy and satisfied wickedness.

"Thamar," cried Ra'hel, "what has become of Tahoser?"

The old woman, as if startled into wakefulness by the voice of her mistress, slowly uncoiled her spider-like limbs, rose to her feet, rubbed several times her brown eyelids with the back of her left hand, yellower than that of a mummy, and said with a well assumed air of astonishment: "Is she not there?"

"No," replied Ra'hel; "and did I not yet see her place hollowed out on the bed by the side of

my own, and hanging on that peg the gown which she threw off, I could believe that the strange events of the past night were but an illusion and a dream."

Though she was perfectly well aware of the manner of Tahoser's disappearance, Thamar raised a piece of the drapery stretched in the corner of the room, as if the Egyptian might have been concealed behind it. She opened the door of the hut and standing on the threshold minutely explored the neighbourhood with her glance; then turning towards the interior, she signed negatively to her mistress.

"It is strange," said Ra'hel, thoughtfully.

"Mistress," said the old woman, drawing near the Israelite, with a gentle, petting tone, "you know that I disliked the foreign woman."

"You dislike every one, Thamar," replied Ra'hel, smiling.

"Except you, mistress," answered the old woman, placing to her lips one of the young woman's hands.

"I know it. You are devoted to me."

"I never had any children, and sometimes I fancy that I am your mother."

"Good Thamar," said Ra'hel, moved.

"Was I wrong," continued Thamar, "to consider her appearance so strange? Her disappearance explains it. She said she was Tahoser, the daughter of Petamounoph. She was nothing but a fiend which took that form to seduce and tempt a child of Israel. Did you see how troubled she was when Poëri spoke against the idols of wood, stone, and metal, and how difficult it was for her to say, 'I will try to believe in your God'? It seemed as though the words burnt her lips like hot coals."

"The tears which fell upon my breast were genuine tears, — a woman's tears," said Ra'hel.

"Crocodiles weep when they want, and hyenas laugh to attract their prey," continued the old woman. "The evil spirits which prowl at night in the stones and ruins know many a trick and play every part."

"So, according to you, poor Tahoser was nothing but a phantom raised up by hell?"

"Unquestionably," replied Thamar. "Is it likely that the daughter of the priest Petamounoph would have fallen in love with Poëri and preferred him to the Pharaoh, who, it is said, loves her?"

Ra'hel, who did not admit that any one in the world was superior to Poëri, did not think this unlikely.

"If she loved him as much as she said she did, why did she run off when, with your consent, he accepted her as his second wife? It was the condition that she must renounce the false gods and adore Jehovah which put to flight that devil in disguise."

"In any case, that devil had a very sweet voice and very tender eyes."

At bottom Ra'hel was perhaps not greatly dissatisfied with the disappearance of Tahoser; she thus kept wholly to herself the heart which she had been willing to share, and yet she had the merit of the sacrifice she had made.

Under pretext of going to the market, Thamar went out and started for the King's palace, her cupidity not having allowed her to forget his promise. She had provided herself with a great bag of coarse cloth which she proposed to fill with gold.

When she appeared at the palace gate the soldiers did not beat her as they had done the first day. She enjoyed the king's favour, and the officer of the guard made her enter at once. Timopht brought her to the Pharaoh.

When he perceived the vile old hag crawling towards his throne like a crushed insect, the King

remembered his promise and gave orders to open one of the granite chambers of the treasury, and to allow her to take as much gold as she could carry away. Timopht, whom Pharaoh trusted, and who knew the secret of the lock, opened the stone gate.

The vast mass of gold sparkled in the sunbeams, but the brilliancy of the metal was no brighter than the glance of the old woman. Her eyes turned yellow and flashed strangely. After a few moments of dazzled contemplation, she pulled up the sleeves of her patched tunic and bared her withered arms, on which the muscles stood out like cords, and which were deeply wrinkled above the elbow; then she opened and closed her curved fingers, like the talons of a griffin, and sprang at the mass of golden bars with fierce and bestial avidity. She plunged her arms amid the ingots, moved them, stirred them round, rolled them over, threw them up; her lips trembled, her nostrils swelled, and down her spine ran convulsive tremors. Intoxicated, mad, shaken by trepidation and spasmodic laughter, she cast handfuls of gold into her bag, saying, "More! more! more!" so that soon it was full up to the mouth.

Timopht, amused at the sight, let her have her way, not dreaming that such a skinny spectre could move so enormous a weight. But Thamar bound the mouth of her sack with a cord, and to the great surprise of the Egyptian, lifted it on her back. Avarice lent to that broken-down frame unexpected strength of muscles; all the nerves and fibres of the arms, the neck, the shoulders, strained to breaking, bore up under a mass of metal which would have made the most robust Nahasi porter bow down. Her brows bent, like those of an ox when the ploughshare strikes a stone, Thamar staggered out of the palace, knocking up against the walls, walking almost on all-fours, for every now and then she put her hands out to save herself from being crushed under her burden. But at last she got out, and the load of gold was her legitimate property. Breathless, exhausted, covered with sweat, her back bruised and her fingers cut, she sat down at the palace gate upon her beloved sack, and never did any seat appear to her so soft. After a short time, she perceived a couple of Israelites, passing by with a litter on which they had been bearing a burden. She called them, and promising them a handsome reward, induced them to take up the sack and to follow

her. The Israelites, preceded by Thamar, went down the streets of Thebes, reached the waste places studded with mud huts and placed the sack in one of them. Thamar paid them grumblingly the promised reward.

Meanwhile Tahoser had been installed in a splendid apartment, a regal apartment as beautiful as that of the Pharaoh. Elegant pillars with lotus capitals upbore the starry roof, framed in by a cornice of blue palm-branches painted upon a golden background. Panels of a tender lilac-colour with green lines ending in flower buds showed symmetrically on the walls; fine matting covered the stone slabs of the flooring; sofas, inlaid with plates of metal alternating with enamels, and covered with black stuffs adorned with red circles, armchairs with lions' feet, with cushions that fell over the back, stools formed of swans' necks interlaced, piles of purple leather cushions filled with thistle-down, seats which could hold two persons, tables of costly woods supported by statues of Asiatic captives,— formed the furniture of the room.

On richly carved pedestals rested tall porcelain vases and great golden bowls, the workmanship of which was even more precious than the material. One of them

with a slender base, was supported by two horses' heads with fringed hoods and harness. The handles were formed of two lotus stalks gracefully falling over two rose ornaments; on the cover were ibises with erect ears and sharp horns, and on the body of the vase were represented gazelles flying from the dogs amid stalks of papyrus. Another, no less curious, had for cover a monstrous Typhon head, adorned with palms and grimacing between two vipers. The sides were ornamented with leaves and denticulated bands.

One of the bowls, supported by two figures wearing mitres and dressed in robes with broad borders, with one hand upbearing the handle and with the other the foot, amazed by its huge size and the perfection and finish of the ornamentation. The other, smaller and more perfect in shape perhaps, spread out gracefully; the slender and supple bodies of jackals whose paws rested upon the edge as if the animals sought to drink, formed the handles. Metal mirrors, framed with deformed faces, as though to give the beauty who looked into them the pleasure of contrast, coffers of cedar or sycamore wood painted and ornamented, caskets of enamelled ware, flagons of alabaster, onyx, and glass, boxes

of perfumes, — all these testified to the magnificence that the Pharaoh lavished upon Tahoser. The precious objects contained in that room were well worth a kingdom's ransom.

Seated upon an ivory seat, Tahoser looked at the stuffs and gems shown her by nude maidens, who scattered around the wealth contained in the coffers. Tahoser had just emerged from the bath, and the aromatic oils with which she had been rubbed, still further softened her delicate, satin-like skin ; her flesh was almost translucent. She was of superhuman beauty, and when she gazed upon the burnished metal mirror, with her eyes brightened with antimony, she could not help smiling upon her reflection. A full gauze robe enveloped her fair form without veiling it. For sole ornament she wore a necklace composed of lapis-lazuli hearts surmounted by crosses, hanging from a string of gold and pearls.

The Pharaoh appeared on the threshold of the hall. A golden asp bound his thick hair, and a calasiris, the folds of which, brought forward, formed a point, enclosed his body from the belt to the knees ; a single necklace encircled his unconquered, muscular neck.

On perceiving the King, Tahoser rose from her seat to prostrate herself, but the Pharaoh came to her, raised her up, and made her sit down.

"Do not thus humble yourself, Tahoser," he said in a gentle voice. "I will you to be my equal. I am weary of being alone in the universe. Although I am almighty and possess you, I shall wait until you love me as if I were but a man. Put away all fear; be a woman with a woman's will, sympathies, antipathies, and caprices. I have never seen one. But if your heart at last speaks in my favour, hold out to me, when I enter your room, in order that I may know it, the lotus flower out of your hair."

Though he strove to prevent it, Tahoser threw herself at the knees of the Pharaoh and let fall a tear upon his bare feet.

"Why is my soul Poëri's?" she said to herself as she resumed her place upon the ivory seat.

Timopht, putting one hand on the ground and the other on his head, entered the room.

"O King," he said, "a mysterious personage seeks to speak to you. His gray beard falls down to his waist, shining horns emerge from his bare brow, and his eyes shine like fire. An unknown power precedes

him, for all the guards fall back and all the gates open before him. What he says must be done, and I have come to you in the midst of your pleasures, even were death to be the punishment of my audacity."

"What is his name?" said the King.

"Mosche," replied Timopht.

XV

THE King passed into another hall to receive Mosche, and sat down on a throne, the arms of which were formed of lions, hung a broad pectoral ornament on his breast, and assumed a pose of supreme indifference.

Mosche appeared, accompanied by another Hebrew, called Aharon. August though the Pharaoh was, as he sat on his golden throne, surrounded by his officers and his fan-bearers, within that high hall with its huge columns, against that background of paintings which depicted the deeds of his ancestors or his own, Mosche was no less imposing. In him the majesty of age equalled the majesty of sovereignty. Although he was seventy years old, he seemed endowed with manly vigour, and nothing in him showed decadence into senility. The wrinkles on his brow and his cheeks, like the marks of the chisel on the granite, made him venerable without telling his age. His brown and wrinkled neck was joined to his powerful shoulders by gaunt but still powerful muscles, and a network of sinewy veins showed upon his hands, which did not

tremble as old men's hands generally do. A soul more energetic than a human soul vivified his body, and on his face shone in the shadow a strange light. It seemed like the reflection of an invisible sun.

Without prostrating himself, as was the custom when men approached the King, Mosche drew near the throne of the Pharaoh and said to him: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.'"

The Pharaoh replied, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

Without being intimidated by the King's words, the tall old man replied unhesitatingly, for the stuttering which had formerly affected him had disappeared, —

"The God of the Hebrews hath met with us. Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword."

Aharon confirmed by a nod the demand of Mosche.

"Wherefore do ye, Mosche and Aharon, let the people from their works?" replied the Pharaoh. "Happily for you I am to-day in a clement humour, for I might have had you beaten with rods, had your tongues

and ears cut off, or thrown you living to the crocodiles. Know, for I tell you so, there is no other god than Ammon Ra, the supreme and primeval being, at once male and female; who is his own father and his own mother, whose husband he is also; from whom come all the other gods which unite heaven to earth and which are but forms of those two obscure principles. The wise know it, and the priests, who have long studied mysteries in the colleges and in the temples consecrated to his diverse representations. Do not, therefore, allege another god of your own invention to move the Hebrews to revolt, and to prevent them from doing their appointed work. Your pretext of sacrifice is plain, — you wish to flee. Withdraw from before me, and continue to mould clay for my royal and priestly buildings, for my pyramids, my palaces, and my walls. Go! I have spoken."

Mosche, seeing that he could not move the Pharaoh's heart, and that if he insisted he would excite his wrath, withdrew in silence, followed by Aharon in dismay.

"I have obeyed the Lord God," said Mosche to his companion when they had crossed the pylon, "but the Pharaoh remains as insensible as if I had been speaking to those granite figures seated upon thrones at

the palace gates, or to those idols with heads of dogs, monkeys, or hawks to which the priests burn incense within the depths of the sanctuaries. What shall we reply to the people when they question us on the result of our mission?"

The Pharaoh, fearing lest the Hebrews should bethink themselves of throwing off their yoke in accordance with the suggestions of Mosche, made them work more severely than before, and refused them straw to make their bricks. Thenceforth the children of Israel spread throughout Egypt, plucking the stubble and cursing their tyrants; for they were very unhappy, and they said that the advice of Mosche had increased their misery.

One day Mosche and Aharon reappeared in the palace, and once again called upon the King to let the Hebrews go to sacrifice unto the Lord in the wilderness.

"What proof have I," replied the Pharaoh, "that it is the Lord who sends you to me to tell me these things, and that you are not, as I fancy, vile impostors?"

Aharon threw down his wand before the King, and the wood began to twist, to curl, to grow scales, to move its head and tail, to rise up, and to utter horrible hissings: the wand had been changed into a serpent.

Its rings grated over the flags, it swelled its hood, it whipped out its forked tongue, and rolling its red eyes, seemed to select the victim which it was about to bite.

The officers and servants ranged around the throne remained motionless and mute with terror at the sight of this prodigy ; the bravest half drew their swords.

But the Pharaoh was in no wise moved. A disdainful smile flitted over his lips, and he said, —

"Is that all you can do? The miracle is slight, and the prodigy poor. Send for my wise men, my sorcerers and my magicians."

They came. They were men of venerable and mystic appearance, with shaven heads, wearing sandals of byblos, dressed in long linen robes, holding in their hands wands on which were engraved hieroglyphs. They were yellow and dried up like mummies by night watches, study, and austerity ; the fatigue entailed by successive initiations could be read upon their faces, in which their eyes alone seemed to retain life.

They drew up in a line before the throne of the Pharaoh without paying the least attention to the serpent, which wriggled, crawled, and hissed.

"Can you," said the King, "change your wands into reptiles as Aharon has done?"

"O King, is it for such child's play," said the oldest of the band, "that you have sent for us from the recesses of the secret chambers where under the starry ceilings, by the light of the lamps, we are meditating, bending over undecipherable papyri, kneeling before the hieroglyphic stelæ with their mysterious, deep meanings, forcing the secrets of nature, calculating the power of numbers, bearing our trembling hand to the border of the veil of the great Isis? Let us go back, for life is short, and the wise man has scarce time to tell to another the word which he has learned. Let us go back to our laboratories. The merest juggler, the first charmer of serpents who plays the flute on the public squares, will suffice to satisfy you."

"Ennana, do what I wish," said the Pharaoh to the chief of the wise men and the magicians.

Old Ennana turned towards the band of sages, who remained standing motionless, their minds already lost again in deep meditations.

"Cast down every man your rod as you whisper the magic word."

The rods fell together with a sharp sound upon the stone slabs, and the wise men resumed their perpendicular attitude like the statues placed against the pillars of the tombs. They did not even deign to look at their feet to see if the miracle were being wrought, so sure were they of the power of their formula.

And then was seen a strange and horrible sight. The rods twisted like branches of green wood in the fire, the ends flattened out into the shape of heads, thinned out into the shape of tails. Some remained smooth, others became scaly, according to the kind of serpent. All these swarmed and crawled and hissed, interlaced and knotted into hideous knots. There were vipers bearing the mark of the spear-head upon their low brows, horned snakes with menacing protuberances, greenish, viscous hydras, asps with movable fangs, yellow trigonocephalæ, orvets or blind serpents, crotalidæ with short heads, black skins, and rattles on their tails, amphisbena, which can glide forward or backward, boas opening mouths wide enough to swallow an ox, serpents with eyes surrounded with discs like those of owls; — the pavement of the hall was covered with them.

Tahoser, who shared the throne of the Pharaoh, raised her beautiful bare feet and pulled them back under her, pale with terror.

"Well," said the Pharaoh to Mosche, "you see that the skill of my magicians equals, and even surpasses yours; their rods have turned into serpents like that of Aharon. Invent another prodigy if you seek to convince me."

Mosche stretched forth his hand, and Aharon's serpent glided towards the twenty-four reptiles. The struggle was not long; it soon had swallowed the hideous things, real or seeming creations of the wise men of Egypt. Then it resumed its former wand shape.

This result seemed to amaze Ennana. He bent his head, thought for a moment, and said, like a man who perceives something: "I shall find the word and the sign. I have interpreted wrongly the fourth hieroglyph of the fifth perpendicular line in which is the spell of serpents. O King, do you still need us?" said the chief of the wise men aloud. "I long to resume the reading of Hermes Trismegistus, which contains more important secrets than these sleight-of-hand tricks."

The Pharaoh signed to the old man that he might withdraw, and the silent procession returned to the depths of the palace.

The King re-entered the harem with Tahoser. The priest's daughter, terrified and still trembling at these prodigies, knelt down before him and said: "O Pharaoh, do you not fear to anger by your resistance the unknown god who has ordered these Israelites to go a three days' journey into the desert to sacrifice unto him? Let Mosche and his Hebrews depart to fulfil their rites, for perhaps the Lord, as they call him, will afflict the land of Egypt and bring death upon us."

"What! does that reptile jugglery frighten you?" replied the Pharaoh. "Did you not see that my wise men produced serpents with their wands?"

"Yes, but Aharon's devoured them, and that is an ill omen."

"What matters it? Am I not the favourite of Phré, the preferred of Ammon Ra? Have I not under my sandals the effigies of conquered nations? With one breath I shall sweep away when I please the whole of that Hebrew race, and I shall see if their god can protect them."

"Beware, Pharaoh," said Tahoser, who remembered Poëri's words about the power of Jehovah. "Do not allow pride to harden your heart. Mosche and Aharon terrify me; they must be supported by a more powerful god, for they braved your wrath."

"If their god is so powerful," said the Pharaoh, answering the fear expressed by Tahoser, "would he leave them thus captives, humiliated and bowing like beasts of burden under the harvest labour? Let us forget these vain prodigies and live in peace. Think rather of the love I bear you, and remember that the Pharaoh is more powerful than the Lord, the fanciful god of the Hebrews."

"Yes, you are the destroyer of the nations and the ruler of thrones, and men are before you like grains of sand blown by the southern wind. I know it," replied Tahoser.

"And yet I cannot make you love me," said the Pharaoh, with a smile.

"The ibex fears the lion, the dove dreads the hawk, the eye shrinks from the sun, and I can see you yet only through terror and blazing light. It takes human weakness a long time to become familiar with royal majesty; a god always terrifies a mortal."

"You fill me with regret, Tahoser, that I am not the first-comer, an officer, a nomarch, a priest, a labourer, or even less. But since I cannot make the King into a man, I can make a queen out of the woman and bind the golden uræus upon your lovely brow. The Queen will no longer dread the King."

"Even when you make me sit by you on your throne, my thoughts remain kneeling at your feet. But you are so good in spite of your superhuman beauty, your power so boundless and your splendour so dazzling, that perhaps my heart will grow bold and will dare to beat against yours."

Thus talked the Pharaoh and Tahoser. The priest's daughter could not forget Poëri, and sought to gain time by flattering the passion of the King. To escape from the palace, to find the young Hebrew again, was impossible. Besides, Poëri had accepted her love rather than shared it. Ra'hel, in spite of her generosity, was a dangerous rival; and then, the love of the Pharaoh touched the priest's daughter, — she desired to love him, and perhaps she was not so far from doing so as she believed.

XVI

A FEW days later the Pharaoh was driving along the Nile, standing on his chariot and followed by his court. He had gone forth to observe the height of the flood, when in the centre of the road appeared, like two phantoms, Aharon and Mosche. The king drew in his horses, the foam of whose mouths was already flecking the breast of the tall, motionless old man.

Mosche, with slow and solemn voice repeated his adjuration.

"Prove to me by some wonder the power of your god," answered the King, "and I will grant your request."

Turning towards Aharon, who was a few steps behind him, Mosche said, "Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone."

Aharon lifted up his rod and smote the waters that were in the river. The train of the Pharaoh awaited the result anxiously. The King, who had a heart of brass within a breast of granite, smiled disdainfully, trusting in the skill of his wise men to confound the foreign magicians. As soon as the river had been smitten by the rod of the Hebrew, — the rod which had been a serpent, — the waters began to turn muddy and to boil; their mud colour was gradually changed; reddish tones began to mingle with it; then the whole mass assumed a sombre purple colour, and the Nile seemed a river of blood with scarlet waves that edged the banks with rosy foam. It seemed to reflect a vast conflagration or a sky rayed by lightning, but the atmosphere was calm, Thebes was not burning, and the unchanging azure spread over the red stream, marked here and there by the white bellies of dead fishes. The long crocodiles, using their crooked paws, emerged from the river on to the bank, and the heavy hippopotami, like blocks of rose granite covered with leprous, black moss, fled through the reeds, or raised above the stream their mighty heads, unable to breathe in that water of blood. The canals, the fish-ponds, and the pools

had all turned the same colour, and the vessels full of water were red like the basins in which the blood of victims is collected.

The Pharaoh was not astonished at the wonder, and said to the Hebrews, —

"This miracle might terrify a credulous and ignorant people, but it has nothing surprising for me. Let Ennana and the wise men come. They will repeat this enchantment."

The wise men came, led by their chief. Ennana cast a glance on the river and its purple waves, and saw at once what was the matter.

"Restore things to their primitive condition," he said to Mosche's companion; "I will repeat your wonder."

Aharon again smote the stream, which at once resumed its natural colour. Ennana nodded briefly, like an impartial expert who does justice to the skill of a colleague; he considered the enchantment was well wrought for one who had not had, like himself, the opportunity of studying wisdom in the mysterious chambers of the labyrinth, where a very few of the initiated can alone enter, so trying are the tests which have to be undergone.

"It is my turn now," he said; and he stretched out over the Nile his rod engraved with hieroglyphic signs, muttering a few words of a tongue so old that it had probably ceased to be understood even in the days of Mene, the first king of Egypt, — a language spoken by sphinxes, with syllables of granite.

A vast red flood stretched suddenly from one bank to the other, and the Nile again rolled ensanguined waves to the sea. The twenty-four magicians saluted the king as if they were about to withdraw.

"Remain," said the Pharaoh.

They resumed their impassible countenances.

"Have you no other proof of your mission than that? My wise men, you see, imitate your wonders very well."

Without appearing discouraged by the ironical words of the King, Mosche replied: "In seven days' time, if you have not made up your mind to let Israel go into the desert to sacrifice to the Lord according to their rites, I shall return and perform another wonder before you."

At the end of seven days Mosche reappeared. He spoke to his servant Aharon the words of the Lord: —

"Stretch out thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause the frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt."

As soon as Aharon had done as he was bidden, millions of frogs emerged from the canals, the rivers, and the marshes; they covered the fields and the roads, they hopped upon the steps of the temples and the palaces, they invaded the sanctuaries and the most secret chambers; legions of other frogs followed those which had first appeared; they were found in the houses, in the kneading-troughs, in the ovens, in the coffers; no one could step anywhere without crushing some. As if moved by springs, they jumped between peoples' legs, to the right and the left, forward and backward; as far as the eye could reach, they were seen rippling, hopping, jumping past one another, for they already lacked room, and their numbers grew, their ranks became denser, they formed heaps here and there; innumerable green backs turned the countryside into a sort of animated green meadow, on which their yellow eyes shone like flowers. The animals, — horses, asses, goats, — terrified and startled, fled across the fields, but everywhere came upon the loathsome swarms.

The Pharaoh, who from the threshold of his palace beheld this rising tide of frogs with weariness and disgust, crushed as many as he could with the end of his sceptre and pushed back the others with his curved sandals, but his labour was lost; more frogs came no one knew whence, and took the places of the dead, swarming more than they did, croaking more than they did, more loathsome, more uncomfortable, bolder, showing the vertebræ on their backs, staring at him with their big, round eyes, spreading out their webbed feet, wrinkling the white skin of their throats. The vile animals seemed endowed with intelligence, and they formed denser shoals around the King than anywhere else.

The swarming flood grew and still grew: on the knees of the colossi, on the cornices of the palaces, on the backs of the sphinxes, on the entablatures of the temples, on the shoulders of the gods, on the pyramidions of the obelisks, the hideous reptiles, with swollen backs and indrawn feet, had taken up their places. The ibises, which at first had rejoiced at this unexpected treat, and had lanced them with their long beaks, now alarmed by this mighty invasion fled to the upper regions of the sky, snapping their long bills.

Aharon and Mosche triumphed. Ennana, having been summoned, was sunk in thought; his finger, placed upon his bald brow, his eyes half-closed, he seemed to be seeking within his memory for a forgotten magic formula.

The Pharaoh, somewhat uneasy, turned towards him. "Well, Ennana, have you lost your mind by dint of thought? Is this wonder beyond the reach of your wisdom?"

"In no wise, O King; but when a man is engaged in measuring the infinite and calculating eternity and in spelling out the incomprehensible, it may happen that he does not at once recall the odd word which rules reptiles, makes them live or destroys them. Watch! all this vermin is about to vanish."

The old magician waved his wand and whispered a few words; in an instant the fields, the squares, the roads, the quays along the stream, the streets in the city, the courts of the palaces, the rooms of the houses, were cleansed of their croaking guests, and restored to their primitive condition.

The King smiled, proud of the power of his magician.

"It is not enough to have broken the spell of Aharon," said Ennana; "I shall repeat it."

Ennana waved his wand in the opposite direction and muttered the contrary formula. Immediately the frogs reappeared in greater numbers than before, leaping and croaking. In a twinkling the whole land was covered with them, and then Aharon stretched out his rod, and the Egyptian magician was unable to dispel the invasion called up by his enchantment. In vain he spoke the mysterious words, the incantation had lost its power. The bands of wise men withdrew, pursued by the loathsome scourge, and the brows of the Pharaoh were bent with anger, but he hardened his heart and would not grant the prayer of Mosche; his pride strove to struggle and to fight against the unknown God of Israel.

However, unable to get rid of the terrible reptiles, Pharaoh promised Mosche, if he would intercede for him with his God, to grant the Hebrews permission to go into the desert to sacrifice.

The frogs died or returned to the waters, but the Pharaoh hardened his heart, and in spite of the gentle remonstrances of Tahoser, he did not keep his promise.

Then was let loose upon Egypt a multitude of scourges and plagues. A fierce warfare was waged between the wise men and the two Hebrews whose

wonders they reproduced. Mosche changed all the dust in Egypt into lice; Ennana did the same. Mosche took two handfuls of ashes of the furnace and sprinkled them toward the heaven in the sight of the Pharaoh, and immediately they became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast among the Egyptians, but not upon the Hebrews.

"Imitate that wonder!" cried the Pharaoh, beside himself with anger, and as red as if he were standing in front of a fiery furnace, as he addressed himself to the chief of the wise men.

"It would be useless," replied the old man, in a tone of discouragement. "The finger of the Unknown is in all this; our vain formulæ cannot prevail against that mysterious power. Submit, and let us return to our sanctuaries to study this new god, this Lord, who is more powerful than Ammon Ra, Osiris, and Typhon. The learning of Egypt has been overcome, the riddle of the sphinx cannot be answered, and the vast mystery of the great Pyramid covers nothingness only."

As the Pharaoh still refused to let the Hebrews go, all the cattle of the Egyptians were smitten with death; the Israelites lost not a single head.

A wind from the south arose and blew all night long, and in the morning when day dawned, a vast red cloud concealed the whole of the heavens. Through the dun-coloured fog the sun shone red like a buckler in the forge, and seemed to have lost its beams. The cloud was different from other clouds, it was a living cloud; the noise of its wings was heard; it alighted on the earth, not in the shape of great drops of rain, but in shoals of rose, yellow, and green grasshoppers, more numerous than the grains of sand in the Libyan desert. They followed each other in swarms like the straw blown about by the storm; the air was darkened; they filled up the ditches, the ravines, the streams; they put out by their mere mass the fires lighted to destroy them; they struck against obstacles and then heaped up and overcame them. If a man opened his mouth, he breathed one in; they found their way into the folds of the clothing, into the hair, into the nostrils; their dense columns made chariots turn back; they overthrew the solitary passer-by and soon covered him. Their formidable army, springing and flying, marched over Egypt from the Cataracts to the Delta, over an immense breadth of country, destroying the grass, reducing the trees to the condition of skeletons, devour-

ing plants to the roots, leaving behind but a bare earth trodden down like a threshing-floor.

At the request of the Pharaoh Mosche made the scourge cease. An extremely violent west wind carried all the grasshoppers into the Sea of Weeds; but the Pharaoh's obstinate heart, harder than brass, porphyry, or basalt, would not relent.

Hail, a scourge unknown to Egypt, fell from Heaven amid blinding lightning and deafening thunder, in enormous stones, cutting, bruising, breaking everything, mowing down the grain as if with a scythe. Then black, opaque, horrifying darkness, in which lights were extinguished as in the depths of the airless passages, spread its heavy clouds over the land of Egypt, so fair, so luminous, so golden under its azure sky, where the night is clearer than the daytime in other climes. The terrified people, believing themselves already shrouded in the impenetrable darkness of the sepulchre, groped their way or sat down by the propylæa, uttering plaintive cries and tearing their clothes.

One night, a night of terror and of horror, a spectre flew across the whole of Egypt, entering every house the door of which was not marked with red, and the

first-born of the males died, the son of the Pharaoh as well as the son of the meanest hind; yet the King, notwithstanding all these dread signs, would not yield.

He remained within the recesses of his palace, fierce, silent, gazing at the body of his son stretched out upon the funeral couch with the jackals' feet, and heedless of the tears of Tahoser which wetted his hand.

Mosche stood upon the threshold of the room without any one having introduced him, for all the servants had fled hither and thither; and he repeated his demand with imperturbable serenity.

"Go," said Pharaoh at last, "and sacrifice unto your God as you please."

Tahoser threw herself on the King's neck, and said to him, "Now I love you, for you are a man, and not a god of granite."

XVII

THE Pharaoh did not answer Tahoser; he gazed with a sombre eye upon the body of his first-born son; his untamed pride rebelled, even as he yielded. In his heart he did not believe in the Lord, and he explained away the scourges which had smitten Egypt by attributing them to the magic power of Mosche and Aharon, which was greater than that of his magicians. The thought of yielding exasperated his violent, fierce soul.

But even had he wished to retain the Israelites, his terrified people would not have allowed it. The Egyptians, dreading to die, would all have driven out the foreigners who were the cause of their ills and suffering. They kept away from them with superstitious terror, and when the great Hebrew passed, followed by Aharon, the bravest fled, fearing some new prodigy, and they said, "Is not the rod of his companion about to turn into a serpent again and coil itself around us?"

Had Tahoser then forgotten Poëri when she threw her arms around the Pharaoh's neck? In no wise;

but she felt, springing up within the King's obstinate soul, projects of vengeance and of extermination; she feared massacres in which would have fallen the young Hebrew and the gentle Ra'hel, — a general destruction, which this time would have changed the waters of the Nile into real blood; and she strove to turn away the King's wrath by her caresses and gentle words.

The funeral procession came for the body of the young prince, to carry it to the Memnonia quarter, where it was to undergo the preparation for embalming, which lasts seventy days. The Pharaoh saw the body depart with a gloomy look, and he said, as if filled with a melancholy presentiment, —

"Now have I no longer a son, O Tahoser. If I die, you will be Queen of Egypt."

"Why speak of death?" said the priest's daughter; "years will follow years without leaving a trace of their passage upon your robust body, and generations will fall around you like the leaves around a tree which remains standing."

"Have I not been vanquished, — I who am invincible?" replied the Pharaoh. "Of what use are the *bassi-relievi* of the temples and the palaces which represent me armed with a scourge and a sceptre,

driving my war chariot over bodies, and dragging by their hair subject nations, if I am obliged to yield to the spells of a foreign magician, — if the gods to whom I have raised so many vast temples, built for eternity, do not defend me against the unknown god of that low race? The prestige of my power is forever gone; my wise men, reduced to silence, abandon me; my people murmur against me. I am only a mighty simulacrum. I willed, and I could not perform. You were right when you said just now, Tahoser, that I am a man. I have come down to the level of men. But since you love me now, I shall try to forget; I shall wed you when the funeral ceremonies are over."

Fearing lest the Pharaoh should recall his word, the Hebrews were getting ready for departure, and soon their cohorts started, led by a cloud of smoke during the day and a pillar of fire by night. They took their way through the sandy wastes that lie between the Nile and the Sea of Weeds, avoiding the tribes which might have opposed their passage. One after another, the Hebrew tribes defiled in front of the copper statue made by the magicians, which possessed the property of stopping escaping slaves, but this time the spell, which had been invincible for centuries, failed to

work; the Lord had destroyed it. The vast multitude advanced slowly, covering the land with its flocks, its beasts of burden laden with the riches borrowed from the Egyptians, dragging the enormous baggage of a nation which is suddenly migrating. The human eye could see neither the head nor the tail of the column, which disappeared on either horizon in a cloud of dust. If any one had sat down by the roadside to see pass the whole procession, he would have seen the sun rise and set more than once. Men came and came and came always. The sacrifice to the Lord was a vain pretext; Israel was leaving the land of Egypt forever, and the mummy of Yusouf, in its painted and gilded case, was carried along on the shoulders of bearers who were relieved at regular intervals.

So the Pharaoh became very wroth indeed, and resolved to pursue the fleeing Hebrews. He ordered six hundred war chariots to be prepared, called together his commanders, bound around his body his broad crocodile-leather belt, filled the two quivers in his car with arrows and javelins, drew on his wrist his brazen bracelet which deadens the vibration of the cord, and started, followed by a nation of soldiers. Furious and formidable, he urged his horses to their topmost speed,

and behind him the six hundred chariots sounded with the noise of brass like earthly thunder. The foot-soldiers hastened on, but they were unable to keep up with his impetuous speed.

Often the Pharaoh was obliged to stop and await the rest of his army. During these halts he struck with his fist the edge of his chariot, stamped with impatience, and ground his teeth. He bent towards the horizon, seeking to perceive, behind the sand whirled by the wind, the fleeing tribes of the Hebrews, and raged at the thought that every hour increased the interval which separated them. Had not his officers held him back, he would have driven straight before him at the risk of finding himself single-handed against a whole people.

They were no longer traversing the green valley of Egypt, but plains varied with many changing hills and barred with undulations like the surface of the sea; the framework of the land was visible through the thin soil. Jagged rocks, broken into all sorts of shapes, as if giant animals had trampled them under foot when the earth was still in a condition of mud, on the day when it emerged from chaos, broke the stretches here and there, and relieved from time to time by their

abrupt breaks the flat horizon-line which merged into that of the sky in a zone of reddish mist. At vast distances grew palm trees, outspreading their dusty leaves near some spring, frequently dried up, and in the mud of which the thirsty horses plunged their bloodshot nostrils.

But the Pharaoh, insensible to the rain of fire which fell from the white-hot heavens, at once gave the signal for departure, and horsemen and footmen started again on the march. Bodies of oxen or beasts of burden lying on either side, with spirals of vultures sweeping around above them, marked the passage of the Hebrews, and prevented the angry King from losing their track.

A swift army, practised to marching, goes faster than a migrating people which drags with it women, children, old men, baggage, and tents; so the distance was rapidly diminishing between the Egyptian troops and the Israelite tribes.

It was near Pi-ha'hiroth that the Egyptians came up with the Hebrews. The tribes were camped on the shore, but when the people saw shining in the sun the golden chariot of the Pharaoh, followed by his war chariots and his army, they uttered a mighty shout of

terror, and began to curse Mosche, who had led them to destruction.

In point of fact their situation was desperate: in front of the Hebrews was the line of battle, behind them the deep sea. The women rolled on the ground, tearing their clothes, pulling at their hair, beating their breasts.

"Why did you not leave us in Egypt? Slavery is better than death, and you have led us into the desert to die. Were you afraid that we should not have sepulchres enough?"

Thus yelled the multitudes, furious with Mosche, who remained impassible. The bolder took up their arms and prepared to defend themselves, but the confusion was frightful, and the war chariots, when they charged through that compact mass, would certainly make an awful slaughter.

Mosche stretched out his hand over the sea, after having called upon the name of the Lord, and then took place a wonder which no magician could have repeated; there arose an east wind of startling violence which blew through the waters of the Sea of Weeds like the share of a giant plough, throwing to right and left briny mountains crowned with crests of foam.

Divided by the impetuosity of that irresistible wind, which would have swept away the pyramids like grains of dust, the waters rose like liquid walls and left free between them a broad way which could be traversed dry shod. Through their translucency, as behind thick glass, were seen marine monsters twisting and squirming, terrified at being surprised by daylight in the mysterious depths of the abyss.

The Hebrew tribes rushed through this miraculous issue, forming a human torrent that flowed between two steep banks of green waters. An innumerable race marked with two millions of black dots the livid bottom of the gulf, and impressed its feet upon mud which the belly of the leviathans alone had rayed; and the terrible wind still blew, passing over the heads of the Hebrews, whom it would have thrown to the ground like grain, and keeping back by its breath the heap of roaring waters.

It was the breath of the Lord which was dividing the sea.

Terrified at the wonder, the Egyptians hesitated to pursue the Hebrews, but the Pharaoh, with that high courage which nothing could daunt, urged on his horses, which reared and plunged, lashing them in

turn with his terrible thonged whip, his eyes blood-shot, foaming at the lips, and roaring like a lion whose prey is escaping. He at last compelled them to enter that strangely opened road. The six hundred cars followed. The Israelites of the rear guard, among whom were Poëri, Ra'hel, and Thamar, believed themselves lost when they saw the enemy taking the same road that they had traversed. But when the Egyptians were fairly within the gulf, Mosche made a sign, the wheels of the cars fell off, and there was a horrible confusion of horses and warriors falling against each other. Then the mountains of water, miraculously sustained, suddenly fell, and the sea closed in, whirling in its foam men and animals and chariots like straw caught by the eddies in the current of a river.

Alone the Pharaoh, standing within his chariot, which had come to the surface, shot, drunk with pride and anger, the last arrows of his quiver against the Hebrews, who were now reaching the other shore. Having exhausted his arrows, he took up his javelin, and although already nearly half engulfed, with his arm alone above the water, he hurled it, a powerless weapon, against the unknown God whom he still

braved from the depths of the abyss. A mighty billow, which rolled two or three times over the edge of the sea, engulfed the last remains.

Nothing was left of the glory and of the army of the Pharaoh.

On the other bank Miriam, the sister of Aharon, exulted and sang as she played on the timbrel, and all the women of Israel beat time upon onager-skins. Two millions of voices were singing the hymn of deliverance.

XVIII

TAHOSER in vain awaited Pharaoh, and then reigned over Egypt. Then she also died after a short time. She was placed in the magnificent tomb which had been prepared for the king, whose body was never found; and her story, written upon papyrus, with the headings of the pages in red characters, by Kakevou, a scribe of the double chamber of light and keeper of the books, was placed by her side under the network of bands.

Was it the Pharaoh or Poëri she regretted? Kakevou the scribe does not tell us, and Dr. Rumphius, who translated the hieroglyphs of the Egyptian grammat, did not venture to settle the question.

As for Lord Evandale, he never married, although he was the last of his race. His young countrywomen cannot understand his coldness towards their sex. But it would never occur to them that Lord Evandale is retrospectively in love with Tahoser, the daughter of the high-priest Petamounoph, who died three thousand five hundred years ago. Yet there are English crazes which have less sound reason for their existence than this one.

Egypt

EGYPT

THE UNWRAPPING OF A MUMMY

DURING the Exhibition of 1857, I was invited to be present at the opening of one of the mummy cases in the collection of Egyptian antiquities, and at the unwrapping of the mummy it contained. My curiosity was indeed lively. My readers will easily understand the reason: the scene at which I was to be present I had imagined and described beforehand in the "Romance of a Mummy." I do not say this to draw attention to my book, but to explain the peculiar interest I took in this archæological and funereal meeting.

When I entered the room, the mummy, already taken from the case, was laid on a table, its human shape showing indistinctly through the thickness of the wrappings. On the faces of the coffin was painted the Judgment of the Soul, the scene which is usually represented in such cases. The soul of the dead woman, led by two funeral genii, the one hostile, the other favourable, was bowing before Osiris, the great judge

of the dead, seated on his throne, wearing the pschent, the conventional beard on the chin, and a whip in his hand. Farther on, the dead woman's actions, good or bad, represented by a pot of flowers and a rough piece of stone, were being weighed in scales. A long line of judges, with heads of lions, hawks, or jackals, were awaiting in hieratic attitudes the result of the weighing before delivering judgment. Below this painting were inscribed the prayers of the funeral ritual and the confession of the dead, who did not own to her faults, but stated, on the contrary, those she had not committed, — "I have not been guilty of murder, or of theft, or of adultery," etc. Another inscription contained the genealogy of the woman, both on the father's and on the mother's side. I do not transcribe here the series of strange names, the last of which is that of Nes Khons, the lady enclosed in the case, where she believed herself sure of rest while awaiting the day on which her soul would, after many trials, be reunited to its well-preserved body, and enjoy supreme felicity with its own flesh and blood; a broken hope, for death is as disappointing as life.

The work of unrolling the bandages began; the outer envelope, of stout linen, was ripped open with

scissors. A faint, delicate odour of balsam, incense, and other aromatic drugs spread through the room like the odour of an apothecary's shop. The end of the bandage was then sought for, and when found, the mummy was placed upright to allow the operator to move freely around her and to roll up the endless band, turned to the yellow colour of écru linen by the palm wine and other preserving liquids.

Strange indeed was the appearance of the tall rag-doll, the armature of which was a dead body, moving so stiffly and awkwardly with a sort of horrible parody of life, under the hands that were stripping it, while the bandages rose in heaps around it. Sometimes the bandages held in place pieces of stuff like fringed serviettes intended to fill hollows or to support the shape.

Pieces of linen, cut open in the middle, had been passed over the head and, fitted to the shoulders, fell down over the chest. All these obstacles having been removed, there appeared a sort of veil like coarse India muslin, of a pinkish colour, the soft tone of which would have delighted a painter. It appears to me that the dye must have been anatto, unless the muslin, originally red, turned rose-colour through the action of

the balsam and of time. Under the veil there was another series of bandages, of finer linen, which bound the body more closely with their innumerable folds. Our curiosity was becoming feverish, and the mummy was being turned somewhat quickly. A Hoffmann or an Edgar Poe could have found here a subject for one of his weird tales. It so happened that a sudden storm was lashing the windows with heavy drops of rain that rattled like hail; pale lightnings illumined on the shelves of the cupboards the old yellowed skulls and the grimacing death's-heads of the Anthropological Museum; while the low rolling of the thunder formed an accompaniment to the waltz of Nes Khons, the daughter of Horus and Rouaa, as she pirouetted in the impatient hands of those who were unwrapping her.

The mummy was visibly growing smaller in size, and its slender form showed more and more plainly under its diminishing wrappings. A vast quantity of linen filled the room, and we could not help wondering how a box which was scarcely larger than an ordinary coffin had managed to hold it all. The neck was the first portion of the body to issue from the bandages; it was covered with a fairly thick layer of naphtha

which had to be chiselled away. Suddenly, through the black remains of the natron, there flashed on the upper part of the breast a bright gleam of gold, and soon there was laid bare a thin sheet of metal, cut out into the shape of the sacred hawk, its wings outspread, its tail fanlike like that of eagles in heraldry. Upon this bit of gold — a funeral jewel not rich enough to tempt body-snatchers — had been written with a reed and ink a prayer to the gods, protectors of the tombs, asking that the heart and the visceræ of the dead should not be removed far from her body. A beautiful microscopic hawk, which would have made a lovely watch-charm, was attached by a thread to a necklace of small plates of blue glass, to which was hung also a sort of amulet in the shape of a flail, made of turquoise-blue enamel. Some of the plates had become semi-opaque, no doubt owing to the heat of the boiling bitumen which had been poured over them, and then had slowly cooled.

So far, of course, nothing unusual had been found; in mummy cases there are often discovered numbers of these small trifles, and every curiosity shop is full of similar blue enamelled-ware figures; but we now came upon an unexpected and touchingly graceful detail.

Under each armpit of the dead woman had been placed a flower, absolutely colourless, like plants which have been long pressed between the leaves of a herbarium, but perfectly preserved, and to which a botanist could readily have assigned a name. Were they blooms of the lotus or the persea? No one of us could say. This find made me thoughtful. Who was it that had put these poor flowers there, like a supreme farewell, at the moment when the beloved body was about to disappear under the first rolls of bandages? Flowers that are three thousand years old, so frail and yet so eternal, make a strange impression upon one.

There was also found amid the bandages a small fruit-berry, the species of which it is difficult to determine. Perhaps it was a berry of the nepenthe, which brought oblivion. On a bit of stuff, carefully detached, was written within a cartouche the name of an unknown king belonging to a dynasty no less forgotten. This mummy fills up a vacant place in history and tells of a new Pharaoh.

The face was still hidden under its mask of linen and bitumen, which could not be easily detached, for it had been firmly fixed by an indefinite number of centuries. Under the pressure of the chisel a portion

gave way, and two white eyes with great black pupils shone with fictitious life between brown eyelids. They were enamelled eyes, such as it was customary to insert in carefully prepared mummies. The clear, fixed glance, gazing out of the dead face, produced a terrifying effect; the body seemed to behold with disdainful surprise the living beings that moved around it. The eyebrows showed quite plainly upon the orbit, hollowed by the sinking of the flesh. The nose, I must confess, — and in this respect Nes Khons was less pretty than Tahoser, — had been turned down to conceal the incision through which the brain had been drawn from the skull, and a leaf of gold had been placed on the mouth as the seal of eternal silence. The hair, exceedingly fine, silky, and soft, dressed in light curls, did not fall below the tops of the ears, and was of that auburn tint so much prized by Venetian women. It looked like a child's hair dyed with henna, as one sees it in Algeria. I do not think that this colour was the natural one; Nes Khons must have been dark like other Egyptians, and the brown tone was doubtless produced by the essences and perfumes of the embalmer.

Little by little the body began to show in its sad nudity. The reddish skin of the torso, as the air came in contact with it, assumed a bluish bloom, and there was visible on the side the cut through which had been drawn the entrails, and from which escaped, like the sawdust of a ripped-up doll, the sawdust of aromatic wood mixed with resin in grains that looked like colophony. The arms were stretched out, and the bony hands with their gilded nails imitated with sepulchral modesty the gesture of the Venus of Medici. The feet, slightly contracted by the drying up of the flesh and the muscles, seemed to have been shapely and small, and the nails were gilded like those of the hand.

What was she, after all, this Nes Khons, daughter of Horus and Rouaa, called Lady in her epitaph? Young or old, beautiful or ugly? It would be difficult to say. She is now not much more than a skin covering bones, and it is impossible to discover in the dry, sharp lines the graceful contours of Egyptian women, such as we see them depicted in temples, palaces, and tombs. But is it not a surprising thing, one that seems to belong to the realm of dreams, to see on a table, in still appreciable shape, a being

which walked in the sunshine, which lived and loved five hundred years before Moses, two thousand years before Jesus Christ? For that is the age of the mummy which the caprice of fate drew from its cartonnage in the midst of the Universal Exposition, amid all the machinery of our modern civilisation.

FROM ALEXANDRIA TO CAIRO

THE railway to Cairo runs first along a narrow strip of sand which separates the Baheirehma'adieh, or Lake of Aboukir, from Lake Mareotis, now filled with salt water. As you go towards Cairo, Lake Mareotis is on your right and the Lake of Aboukir on your left. The former stretches out like a sea between shores so low that they disappear, and thus make it impossible to estimate the size of the lake, which melts away into the sky on the horizon.

The sunlight fell perpendicularly upon its smooth waters, and made them flash and sparkle until the eye was weary; in other places, the gray waters lay stagnant amid the gray sands, or else were of the dead white of tin. It would have been easy to believe one's self in the Holland Polders, travelling along one of the sleepy inland seas. The heavens were as colourless as Van der Velde's skies, and the travellers, who, trusting to painters, had dreamed of a blaze of colour, gazed with amazement upon

the vast extent of absolutely flat, grayish toned land, which in no wise recalled Egypt, at least such as one imagines it to be. On the side opposite Lake Mareotis rose, in the midst of luxuriant gardens, the country homes of the rich merchants of the city, of the government officials and of the consuls, painted in bright colours, sky-blue, rose or yellow, picked out with white, and here and there the great sails of boats, bound to Foueh or to Rosetta through the Mahmoudieh Canal, showed above the vegetation and seemed to be travelling on dry land. This curious effect, which always causes surprise, is often met with in the neighbourhood of Leyden, Dordrecht, and Haarlem, and in swampy countries where the water lies level with the ground, and sometimes even, kept in by dikes, is higher than the level of the country by several yards.

Where the salt water ends, the aspect of the country changes, not gradually, but suddenly; on the one hand absolute barrenness, on the other exuberant vegetation; and wherever irrigation brings a drop of water, plants spring up, and the sterile dust becomes fertile soil. The contrast is most striking. We had passed Lake Mareotis, and on either side

of the railroad stretched fields of *doora* or maize, of cotton plants in various stages of growth, some opening their pretty yellow flowers, others shedding the white silk from their pods. Gutters full of muddy water rayed the black ground with lines that shone here and there in the light. These were fed by broader canals connected with the Nile. Small dikes of earth, easily opened with a blow of a pickaxe, dammed up the waters until watering-time. The rough wheels of the sakiehs, turned by buffaloes, oxen, camels, or asses, raised the water to higher levels. Sometimes, even, two robust fellahs, perfectly naked, tawny and shining like Florentine bronzes, standing on the edge of a canal and balancing like a swing a basket of waterproof esparto suspended from two ropes of which they held the ends, skimmed the surface of the water and dashed it into the neighbouring field with amazing dexterity. Fellahs in short blue tunics were ploughing, holding the handle of a primitive plough drawn by a camel and a hump-backed Soudanese ox; others gathered cotton and maize; others dug ditches; others again dragged branches of trees by way of a harrow over the furrows which the inundation had scarce left. Every-

where was seen an activity not much in accord with the traditional Oriental idleness.

The first fellahin villages seen on the right and left of the road impress one curiously. They are collections of huts of unbaked brick cemented with mud, with flat roofs occasionally topped with a sort of whitewashed turret for pigeons, the sloping walls of which faintly recall the outline of a truncated Egyptian pylon. A door as low as that of a tomb, and two or three holes pierced in the wall are the only openings in these huts, which look more like the work of termites than that of men. Often half the village — if such a name can be given to these earthen huts — has been washed away by the rains or sapped by the flood; but no great harm is done; with a few handfuls of mud the house is soon rebuilt, and five or six days of sunshine suffice to make it inhabitable.

This description, scrupulously exact, does not give a very attractive idea of a fellahin village; but plant by the side of these cubes of gray earth a clump of date palms, have a camel or two kneel down in front of the doors, which look like the mouths of warrens, let a woman come out from one of them draped in her long blue gown, holding a child by the hand and bearing a

jar of water on her head, light it all up with sunlight, and you have a charming and characteristic picture.

The thing which strikes the most inattentive traveller as soon as he steps into this Lower Egypt, where from time immemorial the Nile has been accumulating its mud in thin layers, is the close intimacy of the fellah and the earth. Autochthone is the name that best fits him; he springs from the clay which he treads, he is made out of it, and scarce has emerged from it. He manipulates it, presses it as a child presses its nurse's breast, to draw from its brown bosom the milk of fertility. He sinks waist-deep into its fertile mud, drains it, waters it, dries it, according to its needs; cuts canals in it, builds up levees upon it, draws from it the clay with which he constructs his family dwelling and with which he will cement his tomb. Never was a respectful son more careful of his old mother; he does not leave her as do those vagabond children who forsake their natal roof in search of adventures. He remains there, always attentive to the least want of his antique ancestor, the black earth of Kamé. If she thirsts, he gives her drink, if she is troubled by too much humidity, he dries it; in order not to wound her, he works her almost without tools, with his hands; his plough

merely scratches the telluric skin, which the inundation covers each year with a new epidermis. As you watch him going and coming upon that soaking ground, you feel that he is in his element. In his blue garment, which resembles a pontiff's robe, he presides over the marriage of earth and water, he unites the two principles which, warmed by the sun, give birth to life. Nowhere is this harmony between man and the soil so visible; nowhere does the earth play so important a part. It imparts its colour to everything. The houses have the earth tint; the bronze complexion of the fellahs recalls it; the trees covered with fine dust, the waters laden with mud, conform to that fundamental harmony; the animals themselves wear its livery; the dun-coloured camel, the gray ass, the slate-blue buffalo, the ash-coloured pigeon, and the reddish birds all fit in with the general tone.

Another thing which surprises one is the animation visible throughout the country. On the levees along the canals and on those which traverse the inundated portions, there moves a mob of passers-by and of travellers. There is no road so frequented in France, even in the neighbourhood of a populous city. Eastern people do not remain much in their houses, and the

smallest pretext is sufficient for them to set forth, especially as they have not to think, as we have, of the weather; the barometer is always at set fair, and rain is so uncommonly rare that a man would be glad to get a soaking.

There is nothing more enjoyable, more varied and instructive than the procession of people who are going about their business and who show in succession in the opening of the carriage window, as in a frame in which engravings or water-colours are constantly changing.

First, camels ambling along with a resigned and melancholy look, swinging their long necks, curious animals whose awkward shapes recall the attempts of a vanished creation. On the hump of the foremost is perched the turbaned driver, as majestic as Eleazar, the servant of Abraham, going to Mesopotamia to seek a wife for Isaac; he yields with lazy suppleness to the rough, but regular motions of the animal; sometimes smoking his chibouque as if he were seated at the door of a café, or pressing the slow pace of his steed. Camels like to go in single file; they are accustomed to it, and five or six are usually tied together, sometimes even more; and thus the caravan travels along,

showing quaint against the flat lines of the horizon, and for want of any object of comparison, apparently of vast size. On either side of the line trot three or four swift-footed lads, armed with wands; for in the East beasts of burden never lack hostlers and whippers-in. Some of the camels are reddish, others sorrel, others brown, some even are white, but dun is the most frequent colour. They carry stones, wood, grass bound with esparto cords, bundles of sugar-cane, boxes, furniture, — in fact, whatever in our country would be loaded on carts. Just now we might have thought ourselves in Holland as we passed along those gray stretches of submerged ground, but the illusion is soon dispelled; as the camel swings along the canal bank, you feel that you are approaching Cairo, and not Amsterdam.

Next come horsemen, bestriding thin, but spirited horses; droves of small donkeys, their masters perched on their cruppers, almost on their tails, their legs almost touching the ground, ready to be used in case the tricky animal falls or jibs, or even indulges, as it often does, in a roll in the dust of the road. In the East the ass is neither contemned nor considered ridiculous as it is in France; it has preserved its Homeric and

biblical nobility, and every one bestrides it without hesitation, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, women as well as men.

Now along the canal comes a charming group: a young woman robed in a long blue mantle, the folds of which fall chastely around her, is seated upon an ass which a man, still vigorous but whose beard is already streaked with gray and white hairs, leads carefully. In front of the mother, who supports it with one hand, is a naked child, exquisitely beautiful, happy and delighted at his trip. It is a picture of the Flight into Egypt; the figures lack nothing but a fine golden halo around their heads. The Virgin, the Child Jesus, and Saint Joseph must have looked like that, and so must their flight have been in the living and simple reality; their equipage was not much finer. What a pity that some great painter, Perugino, Raphael, or Albert Dürer, does not happen to be here.

Damanhûr, which the railroad traverses, looks very much as must have looked the ancient cities of Egypt, now buried under the sand or fallen into dust. It is surrounded by sloping walls built of unbaked bricks or of pisé which preserves its earthy colour. The flat-roofed houses rise one above another like a collection

of cubes dotted with little black holes. A few dovecotes, the cupolas of which are whitewashed, and one or two minarets striped with red and white, alone impart to the antique appearance of that city the modern aspect of Islamism. On the top of the terraces women, squatting on mats or standing in their long robes of brilliant colours, are looking at us, no doubt attracted by the passing of the train. As they show against the sky, they are wondrously elegant and graceful. They look like statues erected on the top of buildings or the front of temples.

The moment the train stopped, it was invaded by a band of women and children, offering fresh water, bitter oranges, and honey confections to the travellers; and it was delightful to see these brown faces showing at the carriage window their bright smile and their white teeth. I should have liked to remain some time in Damanhûr, but travel, like life, is made up of sacrifices. How many delightful things one is compelled to leave by the roadside, if one wishes to reach the end. A man cannot see everything, and must be satisfied with seeing a few things. So I had to leave Damanhûr and to behold that dream from afar without being able to traverse it. As far as I

could see, even through my glass, the land reached to the horizon line, intersected by canals, broken by gutters, shimmering with pools of water, with scattered clumps of sycamore trees and date palms, with long strips of cultivated ground, water-wheels rising here and there, and enlivened by the incessant coming and going of the labourers who followed, on the backs of camels, horses, or asses, or on foot, the narrow road bordering the levees. At intervals there arose, under the shade of a mimosa, the white cupola of a tomb; sometimes a nude child stood motionless on the edge of the water in the attitude of unconscious reverie, not even turning his head to see the train fly along. This deep gravity in childhood is peculiar to the East. What could that boy, standing on his lump of earth as a Stylites on his pillar, be thinking of? From time to time flocks of pigeons, busy feeding, flew off with a sudden whir as the train passed by, and alighted farther away on the plain; aquatic birds swam swiftly through the reeds that outstretched behind them, pretty wagtails hopped about, wagging their tails, on the crest of the levees; and in the heavens at a vast height, soared hawks, falcons, and gerfalcons, sweeping in great circles. Buffaloes wallowed in the mud of the ditches,

and flocks of black sheep with hanging ears, very like goats, were hurrying along driven by the shepherds. The antique simplicity of the costume of the young herdsmen, with their short tunics, white or blue, faded by the sun, their bare legs, their dusty, naked feet, their felt caps, their crooks, recalled the patriarchal scenes of the Bible.

At the next station we stopped, and I got out to have a look at the landscape. I had scarcely gone a few steps when a wondrous sight met my astonished eyes: before me was the Nile, old Hapi, to give it its ancient Egyptian name, the inexhaustible Father of Waters. Through one of those involuntary plastic impressions which act upon the imagination, the Nile called up to my mind the colossal marble god in one of the lower halls of the Louvre, carelessly leaning on his elbow and, with paternal kindliness, allowing himself to be climbed over by the little children which represent cubits, and the various phases of the inundation. Well, it was not under this mythological aspect that the great river appeared to me for the first time. It was flowing in flood, spreading out broadly like a torrent of reddish mud which scarcely looked like water as it swelled and rushed by irresistibly. It looked like a

river of soil; scarcely did the reflection of the sky imprint here and there upon the gloomy surface of its tumultuous waves a few light touches of azure. It was still almost at the height of its rise, but the flood had the tranquil power of a regular phenomenon, and not the convulsive disorder of a scourge. The majesty of that vast sheet of water laden with fertilising mud produces an almost religious impression. How many vanished civilisations have been reflected for a time in that ever-flowing wave! I remained absorbed as I gazed at it, sunk in thought, and feeling that strange sinking of the heart which one experiences after desire has been fulfilled, and reality has taken the place of the dream. What I was looking at was indeed the Nile, the real Nile, the river which I had so often endeavoured to discover by intuition. A sort of stupor nailed me to the bank, and yet it was a very natural thing that I should come across the Nile in Egypt in the very centre of the Delta. But man is subject to such artless astonishment.

Dhahabiyehs and felûkas spreading their great lateen sails were tacking across the river, passing from one shore to the other, and recalling the shape of the mystic baris of the times of the Pharaohs.

We set out again. The aspect of the country was still the same; fields of cotton, maize, doora, stretched as far as the eye could reach. Here and there glimmered the portions of the ground covered by the flood. Slate-blue buffaloes wallowed in the pools and emerged covered with mud; water birds stood along the edges, and sometimes flew off as the train passed, watched by families of fellahs, squatting on the banks of the ditches. Along the road travelled the endless procession of camels, asses, oxen, black goats, and foot-passengers, which enlivened to such an extent that peaceful, flat landscape. I had already noticed when in Holland the additional importance given to figures by a flat country; the lack of hills makes them stand out, and as they usually show against the sky they loom larger. I seemed to see pass by the zones of painted *bassi-relievi* representing agricultural scenes which occasionally formed part of the decoration of the halls of Egyptian tombs. Here and there rose villages or farms, the lines of whose sloping, earth-gray walls recalled the substructures of antique temples. Groups of sycamore and mimosa trees, set off by clumps of date palms, brought out the soft tones of the walls by the contrast of their rich verdure. Elsewhere

I caught sight of fellahin huts surmounted by white-washed dovecotes, placed side by side like beehives or the minarets of a mosque. We soon reached Tantah, a somewhat important town, to which the fine mosque of Seyd Ahmed Badouy attracts pilgrims twice a year, and the fairs of which are frequented by the caravans.

Tantah, from the railway station, — for the train does not stop long enough to allow travellers to visit the town, — has an animated and picturesque aspect. Amid the houses in the Arab style with their look-outs and their awnings, rise buildings in that Oriental-Italian style dear to persons of progress and of modern ideas, painted in soft colours, ochre, salmon, or sky-blue; flat-roofed clay huts; over all, the minarets of the mosque, the white cupolas of a few tombs, and the inevitable fig trees and palms rising above the low garden walls. Between the town and the station stretches waste ground, a sort of fair-ground, on which are camps, huts of reed or of date-palm branches, tents formed of old rags of cloth and sometimes of the linen of an unrolled turban. The inhabitants of these frail dwellings cook in the open air. The coffee is made, a cup at a time, in a small brass kettle, and on

plates of tin are cooked the thin doora cakes. The fuel is camel's-dung. The fellahs suck eagerly the sweetish juice of the sugar-cane cut into short pieces, and the slices of watermelon show within the green skin their ripe, rosy, flesh, spotted with black seeds. Women, as graceful as statues, come and go, holding the end of their veil between their teeth so as to conceal one half of the face, and bearing on their heads Theban jars or copper vases; while the men, squatting on the ground or on small carpets, their knees up to their chins, forming an acute angle like the legs of locusts, in an attitude which no European could assume, and recalling the judges of Amenti ranged in rows one behind another on the papyri of funeral rituals, preserve that dreamy immobility so dear to Orientals when they have nothing to do; for to move about merely for exercise, as Christians do, strikes them as utter folly.

Dromedaries, alone or grouped in circles, kneeling under their burdens, stretch out their long legs on the sand, motionless in the burning sun. Asses, some of which are daintily harnessed, with saddles of red morocco rising in a boss on the withers, and with headstalls adorned with tufts, and others with an old

carpet for a saddle-cloth, were waiting for the travellers who were to stop at Tantah to bear them from the station to the town. The donkey drivers, clothed in short blue and white tunics, bare-armed and bare-legged, their heads covered with a fez, a wand in their hand, and resembling the slender figures of shepherds or youths which are so exquisitely drawn on the bodies of Greek vases, stood near their animals in an indolent attitude, which they abandoned as soon as a chance customer came their way. Then they indulged in mad gesticulations, guttural cries, and fought with each other until the unfortunate tourist ran the risk of being torn to pieces or stripped of the best part of his garments. Tawny, wandering dogs with jackal ears, fallen indeed from their old position, and forgetting apparently that they counted Anubis, the dog-headed *Anubis latrator*, among their ancestors, passed in and out among the groups, but without taking the least interest in what was going on.

The bonds which in Europe unite the dog to man do not exist in the East; its social instinct has not been developed, its sympathies have not been appealed to; it has no master, and lives in a savage state. No services are asked of it, and it is not cared

for; it has no home and dwells in holes which it makes, unless it stays in some open tomb; no one feeds it; it hunts for itself, gorging on dead bodies and unnamable débris. There is a proverb which says that wolves do not eat each other; Eastern dogs are less scrupulous; they readily devour their sick, wounded, or dead companions. It seemed strange to me to see dogs which did not make any advances to me, and did not seek to be caressed, but maintained a proud and melancholy reserve.

Little girls in blue gowns and little negroes in white tunics came up to the carriages, offering pastry, cakes, bitter oranges, lemons, and apples, — yes, apples. Eastern people seem to be very fond of that acid Northern fruit which, along with wretched, granulous pears, forms part of every dessert, at which of course one never gets either pomegranates, or bananas, or dates, or oranges, or purple figs, or any native fruits, which are no doubt left to the common people.

The whistle of the engine sounded, and we were again carried away through that very humid and very green Delta. However, as we advanced there showed on the horizon lines of rosy land from which vegetable life was wholly absent. The sand of the desert

advances with its waves, as sterile as those of the sea, eternally disturbed by the winds and beating upon the islet of cultivated earth surrounded and stormed by dusty foam, as upon a reef which it endeavours to cover up. In Egypt, whatever lies above the level of the flood is smitten with death. There is no transition; where stops Osiris, Typhon begins; here luxuriant vegetation, there not a blade of grass, not a bit of moss, not a single one of the adventurous plants which grow in solitary and lonely places, — nothing but ground-up sandstone without any mixture of loam. But if a drop of Nile water falls upon it, straightway the barren sand is covered with verdure. These strips of pale salmon-colour form a pleasant contrast with the rich tints of the great plain of verdure spread out before us.

Soon we came upon another arm of the Nile, the Phatnitic branch, which flows into the sea near Damietta. It is crossed by the railway, and on the other side lie the ruins of ancient Athrebys, over which has been built a fellahin village. The train sped along, and soon on the right, above the line of green, turning almost black in the dazzling light, showed in the azure distance the triangular silhouette of the pyramids of

Cheops and Chephren, appearing, from where I first beheld them, like a single mountain with a piece taken out of the summit. The marvellous clearness of the atmosphere made them appear nearer, and had I not been aware of the real distance I should have found it difficult to estimate it correctly. It is quite natural to catch sight of the pyramids as one approaches Cairo; it is to be expected and it is expected, yet the sight causes extraordinary emotion and surprise. It is impossible to describe the effect produced by that vaporous outline so faint that it almost melts into the colour of the sky, and that, if one had not been forewarned, it might escape notice. Neither years nor barbarians have been able to overthrow these artificial mountains, the most gigantic monuments, except, perhaps, the Tower of Babel, ever raised by man. For five thousand years they have been standing there, — almost as old as the world, according to the biblical account. Even our own civilisation, with its powerful methods of destruction, could scarcely manage to tear them down. The pyramids have seen ages and dynasties flow by like billows of sand, and the colossal Sphinx with its noseless face ever smiles at their feet with its ironical and mysterious smile. Even after

they were opened they kept their secret, and yielded up but the bones of oxen by the side of an empty sarcophagus. Eyes that have been closed so long that Europe, perchance, had not emerged from the flood when those eyes beheld the light, gazed upon them from where I am; they are contemporaneous with vanished empires, with strange races of men since swept from the surface of the earth; they have beheld civilisations that we know nothing of; heard spoken the tongues which men seek to make out in hieroglyphics, known manners which would appear to us as strange as a dream. They have been there so long that the stars have changed their places, and they belong to a past so prodigiously fabulous that behind them the dawn of the world seems to shine.

While these thoughts flashed through my mind we were rapidly approaching Cairo, — Cairo, of which I had talked so often with poor Gérard de Nerval, with Gustave Flaubert, and Maxime Du Camp, whose tales had excited my curiosity to the highest pitch. In the case of cities which one has desired to see from childhood, and which one has long inhabited in dreams, one is apt to conceive a fantastic notion which it is very difficult to efface, even in presence of

reality. The sight of an engraving, of a picture, often forms a starting-point. My Cairo, built out of the materials of the "Thousand and One Nights," centred around the Ezbekîyeh Place, the strange painting of which Marilhat had sent from Egypt to one of the first exhibitions which followed the Revolution of July. Unless I am mistaken, it was his first picture, and whatever the perfection which he afterwards attained, I do not believe that he ever painted a work fuller of life, more individual, and more striking. It made a deep and curious impression upon me; I went time and again to see it; I could not take my eyes off it, and it exercised upon me a sort of nostalgic fascination. It was from that painting that my dreams started upon fantastic trips through the narrow streets of ancient Cairo once traversed by Caliph Haroun al Raschid and his faithful vizier Jaffier, under the disguise of slaves or common people. My admiration for the painting was so well known that Marilhat's family gave me, after the death of the famous artist, the pencil sketch of the subject made on the spot, and which he had used as a study for the finished work.

And now we had arrived. A great mob of carriages, asses, donkey drivers, porters, guides, drago-

mans, rioted in front of the railway station, which is at Boulah, a short distance from old Cairo. When we had recovered our luggage, and I had been installed with my friend in a handsome open carriage preceded by a *saïs*, it was with secret delight that I heard the Egyptian providence which watched over us in its *Nizam* uniform and its magenta fez, call out to the coachman, "Hotel Shepheard, Ezbekîyeh Place." I was going to lodge in my dream.

EZBEKÎYEH SQUARE

A FEW minutes later the carriage stopped before the steps of the Hotel Shepheard, which has a sort of veranda provided with chairs and sofas for the convenience of travellers who desire to enjoy the cool air. We were received cordially, and given a fine room, very high-ceiled, with two beds provided with mosquito-nets, and a window looking out upon the Ezbekîyeh Square.

I did not expect to find Marilhat's painting before me, unchanged, and merely enlarged to the proportions of reality. The accounts of tourists who had recently returned from Egypt had made me aware that the Ezbekîyeh no longer looked the same as formerly, when the waters of the Nile turned it into a lake in times of flood, and when it still preserved its true Arab character.

Huge mimosas and sycamores fill up the centre of the square with domes of foliage so intensely green that it looks almost black. On the left rises a row of houses, among which are to be seen, side by side with the newer buildings, old Arab dwellings more or less modernised. A great number of moucharabiehs had

disappeared. There remains a sufficient number of them, however, to preserve the Oriental character of this side of the square.

Above the trees on the other side of the square, higher than the line of the roofs, are seen four or five minarets, the shafts of which, built in courses alternately blue and red, stand out against the azure sky. On the right the scarps of Mokattam, of a rosy gray, show their bare sides, on which no vegetation is apparent. The trees of the square conceal the newer buildings, and thus my dream was not too much upset.

Being an invalid, I had to be somewhat careful, and required two or three days of complete rest. If the reader is fond of travel, he will understand how great was my desire to begin exploring that labyrinth of picturesque streets in which swarms a vari-coloured crowd, but it was out of the question for the time being. I thought that Cairo, more complaisant in this respect than the mountain to the prophet, would come to me if I could not go to it, and as a matter of fact, Cairo was polite enough to do so.

While my luckier companions started to visit the city, I settled myself on the veranda. It was the

best place I could have chosen, for even leaving out the people on the Square, the veranda roof sheltered many curious characters. There were dragomans, most of them Greeks or Copts, wearing the fez and a short, braided jacket and full trousers; cavasses richly costumed in oriental fashion, scimetar on the hip, *kandjar* in the belt, and silver-topped cane in the hand; native servants in white drawers and blue or pink gowns; little negroes, bare-armed and bare-legged, dressed in short tunics striped with brilliant colours; dealers selling kuffiyehs, gandouras, and oriental stuffs manufactured in Lyons, photographic views of Egypt and of Cairo, or pictures of national types, — to say nothing of the travellers themselves, who, having come from all parts of the world, certainly deserved to be looked at.

Opposite the hotel, on the other side of the road, stood in the shade of the mimosas the carriages placed at the disposal of the invited guests by the splendid hospitality of the Khedive. An inspector, blind in one eye, with a turban rolled around his head and wearing a long blue caftan, called them up and gave the drivers the orders of the travellers. There also stood the battalion of donkey drivers with their long-

eared steeds. I am told that there are no less than eighty thousand donkeys in Cairo. That number does not seem to be exaggerated. There are donkeys at every corner, around every mosque, and in the most deserted places there suddenly appear from behind a wall a donkey driver and a donkey that place themselves at your service. These asses are very pretty, spirited, and bright-tempered; they have not the piteous look and the air of melancholy resignation of the asses of our own country, which are ill fed, beaten, and contemned. You feel that they think as much of themselves as other animals do, and that they are not the whole day long a butt for stupid jokes. Perhaps they are aware that Homer compared Ajax to an ass, a comparison which is ridiculous in the West; and they also remember that one of their ancestors bore Miriam, the Virgin Mother of Issa, under the sycamore of Matarieh. Their coat varies from dark-brown to white, through all the shades of dun and gray. Some have white stars and fetlocks. The handsomest are clipped with ingenious coquetry so as to make around the legs patterns which make them look as if they were wearing open-worked stockings. When they are white, the end of the tail and

the mane are dyed with henna. Of course this is only in the case of thorough-bred animals, of the aristocracy of the asinine race, and is not indulged in with the common herd.

Their harness consists of a headstall adorned with tresses, tufts of silk and wool, sometimes coral beads or copper plates, and of a morocco saddle, usually red, rising up in front to prevent falls, but without any cantle. The saddle is placed upon a piece of carpet or striped stuff, and is fastened by a broad girth which passes diagonally under the animal's tail like a crupper-strap; another girth fastens the saddle-cloth, and two short stirrups flap against the animal's sides. The harness is more or less rich according to the means of the donkey driver and the rank of his customers, but I am speaking merely of asses which stand for hire. No one in Cairo considers it undignified to ride an ass, — old men, grown men, dignitaries, townspeople, all use them. Women ride astride, a fashion which in no wise compromises their modesty, thanks to the enormous folds of their broad trousers which almost completely conceal their feet. They often carry before them, placed upon the saddle-bow, a small, half-nude child which they steady with one

hand while with the other they hold the bridle. It is usually women of importance who indulge in this luxury, for the poor fellahin women have no other means of locomotion than their little feet. These beauties, as we may suppose them to be, since they are masked more closely than society ladies at the Opera ball, wear over their garments a *habbarah*, a sort of black taffeta sack, which fills with air and swells in the most ungraceful fashion if the animal's pace is quickened.

In the East a rider, whether on horseback or on an ass, is always accompanied by two or three footmen. One runs on ahead with a wand in his hand to clear the way, the second holds the animal's bridle, and the third hangs on by its tail, or at least puts his hand on the crupper. Sometimes there is a fourth who flits about and stirs up the animal with a switch. Every minute Decamp's "Turkish Patrol," that startling painting which made such a sensation in the Exhibition of 1831, passed before me, amid a cloud of dust, and made me smile; but no one appeared to notice the comicality of the situation: a stout man dressed in white with a broad belt around his waist, perched on a little ass and followed by three or four poor devils,

thin and tanned, with hungry mien, who through excess of zeal and in hope of backshîsh, seem to carry along the rider and his steed.

I must be forgiven all this information about the asses and their drivers, but these occupy so large a space in life at Cairo that they are entitled to the importance which they really possess.

ANCIENT EGYPT

THE solemn title must not terrify the reader. M. Ernest Feydeau's book is, in spite of its title, most attractive reading. In his case science does not mean weariness, as happens too often. The author of "Funeral Customs and Sepulture among the Ancient Nations" desired to be understood of all, and everybody may profit by his long and careful researches. He has not sealed his work with seven seals, as if it were an apocalyptic volume, to be understood by adepts only; he has sought clearness, distinctness, colour, and he has given to archæology the plastic form which it almost always lacks. What is the use of heaping together materials in disorder, stones which are not made to form part of a building, colours which are not turned into pictures? What does the public, for whom, after all, books are meant, get out of so many obscure works, cryptic dissertations, deep researches, with which learned authors seem to mask entrances, as the ancient Egyptians — the comparison is a proper one here — masked the entrances to their tombs and their mummy pits so that no one

might penetrate into them? What is the use of carving in darkness endless panels of hieroglyphs which no eye is to behold and the key to which one keeps for one's self? M. Ernest Feydeau is bold enough to desire to be an artist as well as a scholar; for picturesqueness in no wise detracts from accuracy, though erudites generally affect to believe the contrary. Did not Augustin Thierry draw his intensely living, animated, dramatic, and yet thoroughly true "Stories of the Merovingian Times" from the colourless, diffuse, ill-composed history of Gregory of Tours? Did not Sauval's unreadable work become "Notre-Dame de Paris" in Victor Hugo's hands? Did not Walter Scott, by his novels, Shakespeare by his dramas, render the greatest services to history by giving life to dead chronicles, by putting into flesh and blood heroes on whom forgetfulness had scattered its dust in the solitude of libraries? Does any one suppose that the chroniclers of the future will not consult Balzac to advantage, and look upon his work as a precious mine of documents? How great would be the interest excited by a similar account, domestic, intimate and familiar, by a Greek or a Roman author? We can have some idea of this from the fragments of Petronius and the Tales of Apuleius,

which tell us more about life in the days of antiquity than the gravest writers, who often forget men while dwelling upon facts.

In an essay on the history of manners and customs which forms the introduction to his book, M. Ernest Feydeau has discussed this question of colour applied to science with much spirit, logic, and eloquence. He proves that it is possible, without falling into novel writing, without indulging in imaginativeness, and while preserving the gravity and the authority of history, to group around facts, by the intelligent reading of texts, by the study and the comparison of the monuments, the manners, the customs, the books of vanished races, to show man at a particular time, to put as a background to each event the landscape, the city, or the interior in which it occurred, and in the conqueror's hand the weapon which he really carried. Ideas have forms, events take place amid certain surroundings, individuals wear costumes which archæology, properly understood, can restore to them. That is its proper task. History draws the outline with a graver, archæology must fill it in with colour. Understood in this way, history makes the past present. The innovating archæologist, by an apparently paradoxical inspiration,

has asked of death the secret of life; he has studied the tomb, which has yielded up to him not only the mysteries of destruction, but the customs and the national life of all the nations of antiquity. The sepulchre has faithfully preserved what the memory of man has forgotten and what has been lost in scattered libraries. The tomb alone, opening its sombre lips, has replied to the questions of to-day; it knows what historians do not know; it is impartial, and has no interest in lying, apart from the innocent imposture of the epitaph. Each generation, as it sinks forever under the ground, after having lived and moved for a few moments on its surface, inscribes upon the walls of its funeral dwelling the true expression of its acts, its beliefs, its customs, its arts, its luxuries, its individuality, all that was seen then and that shall never again be seen, and then the hand of man rolls boulders, the desert heaps up sand, the waters of the stream deposit mud upon the forgotten entrance to the necropolis. The pits are filled up, the subterranean passages are effaced, the tombs sink and disappear under the dust of empires. A thousand, two thousand, three thousand, four thousand years pass by, and a lucky stroke of the pick reveals a whole nation within a coffin.

The ancients, differing in this respect from the moderns, spent their life in preparing their last dwelling. The history of their funerals contains, therefore, the germ of their whole history. But that history, full of intimate details, mysterious facts, and documents at times enigmatical, is not to be written like the other form of history which men are satisfied to repeat from age to age. It is amazing how many years the author had to spend in study and research in order to write his book, to bring together his materials, to analyse and to compare them.

After having clearly defined what he means by archæology, the author enters upon his subject. Going back to the beginnings of the world, he depicts the amazement and the grief of man when for the first time he saw his fellow-man die. The entrance on earth of that unknown and terrible power which has since been called death is solemn and tragical. The body is lying there motionless and cold amid its brethren, who are amazed at the sleep which they cannot break, at the livid pallor and the stiffness of the limbs. Horror succeeds surprise when the signs of decomposition become visible. The body is concealed under leaves, under stones heaped up within

caverns, and each one wonders with terror whether that death is an exceptional case, or whether the same fate awaits every one in a more or less distant future. Deaths become more numerous as the primitive family grows older, and at last the conviction comes that it is an inevitable fate. The remembrance of the ancestors, the apparition of their ghosts in the wonders of dreams, the anxiety as to the fate of the soul after the destruction of the body, give rise, along with the presentiment of another life, to the first idea of God. Death teaches eternity and proves irrefragably the existence of a power superior to that of man. The belief in metempsychosis, in the migration of the soul, in other spheres, in reward and punishment according to the works done by men in the flesh, arose among nations in accordance with the degree of civilisation which they had attained. Among the least civilised these doctrines exist in a state of confusion, remain vague, uncouth, surcharged with superstition and peculiarities. Nevertheless, everywhere the mystery of the tomb is venerated.

It may be affirmed that no nation was so pre-occupied with death as ancient Egypt. It is a strange sight to behold that people preparing its tomb from

childhood, refusing to yield up its dust to the elements, and struggling against destruction with invincible obstinacy. Just as the layers of Nile mud have overlaid one another since the birth of time, the generations of Egypt are ranged in order at the bottom of the mummy pits of the hypogea and the pyramids of the necropolis, their bodies intact — for the worm of the tomb dare not attack them, repelled as it is by the bitter bituminous odours. But for the sacrilegious devastations of man, that dead people would be found complete, and its numberless multitudes might cover the earth. Imagination is staggered when it attempts to calculate the probable numbers; if Egyptian civilisation had lasted ten centuries longer, the dead would have ended by expelling the living from their native land. The necropolis would have invaded the city, and the stark mummies in their bandages would have stood up by the wall of the hearth.

You cannot have forgotten the marvellous chapter on "A Bird's-eye view of Paris," an amazing restoration by a poet, in which archæology itself, in spite of the progress it has made, would find it difficult to discover a flaw. Well, what Victor Hugo

has done for mediæval Paris, M. Ernest Feydeau has attempted for the Thebes of the Pharaohs, and his restoration, as complete as it is possible for it to be, and which no historian had attempted, stands out before us as sharply as a plan in relief, and with all the perspective of a panorama. Thebes of the Hundred Gates, as Homer called it, — antiquity has told us nothing more about this ancestress of capitals; but M. Ernest Feydeau takes us walking with him through the city of Rameses; he shows us all its monuments, its temples, its palaces, the dwellings of the inhabitants, the gardens, the harbour, the fleet of vessels; he draws and colours the costumes of the people; he enters the harems, and shows us the travelling musicians, the dancers, the enslaved nations which built for the Egyptians, the soldiers manœuvring on the parade ground, the processions of Ammon, the foreign peoples which come seeking refuge and corn, the caravans of thirty-five hundred years ago bringing in the tribute. Then he describes the colleges of priests, the quarters inhabited by the embalmers, the minutest details of the embalming processes, the funeral rites, the construction of the thousands of hypogea and mummy pits which are

to receive the mummies. Finally he shows us, passing through the streets of that strange city, the funeral procession of a royal scribe upon its catafalque, drawn by oxen, — the numberless mourners, the hosts of servants bearing alms and offerings. I regret that the length of that passage does not allow of my quoting it in full and enabling the reader to mark the union of a beautiful style with scientific knowledge. Unquestionably no modern traveller has ever given a more picturesque description of any existing city, Constantinople, Rome, or Cairo. The artist seems to be seated upon the terrace of a palace, drawing and painting from nature as if he were a contemporary of Rameses, and as if the sands had not covered with their shroud, through which show a few gigantic ruins, the city forever vanished. And yet he indulges in no chance supposition, in no rash padding. Every detail he gives is supported by the most authentic documents. M. Ernest Feydeau put aside every doubtful piece of information and all that appeared susceptible of being interpreted in more than one way. He seems to have been anxious to forestall the suspicious mistrust of scholars, who object to having the dry results of erudition clothed

in poetic language, and who do not believe that a treatise on archæology can possibly be read with as much interest as a novel.

As I have said, the Egyptians have left us no books, and had they done so the art of deciphering hieroglyphics or even phonetic or demotic writing is not yet assured enough to allow of absolute trust being put in it. Happily the Egyptians performed a work of such mightiness that it amazes the beholder By the side of the hieroglyphic inscriptions they carved on the walls of palaces and temples, on the sides of pylons, the faces of the corridors and the bays of funeral chambers, on the faces of the sarcophagi and on the stelæ, on the covers and the interior cartonnages of the mummies, — in short, on every smooth surface of rock, whether sandstone or granite, basalt or porphyry, with an ineffaceable line coloured with tints that the long succession of ages has not faded, — scenes in which we find in detail the habits and customs and the ceremonies of the oldest civilisation in the world. It seems as if those strange and mysterious people, foreseeing the difficulty which posterity would experience in deciphering their hieroglyphics, intrusted their trans-

lation to drawing, and made the hypogea tell the secret kept by the papyri.

Royal ceremonies, triumphal entries, the payments of tribute, all the incidents of military life, of agriculture, sport, fishing, banqueting, dances, the intimate life of the harem, all is reproduced in these endless paintings, so clearly drawn, with the difference in races, variety of types, shape of chariots, of weapons, of arms, of furniture, of utensils, of food, of plants, still clearly visible to-day. A maker of musical instruments could certainly make a harp, a lyre, or a sistrum from the pattern of those upon which are playing the female musicians at the funeral repast represented in one of the tombs of the necropolis of Thebes. The model of a dog-cart in a plate of modern carriages is not drawn more accurately than the profile of the chariot seen in the funeral procession of the ecclesiastical scribe of Amenoph III, a king of the eighteenth dynasty.

The author has not confined himself to these purely material details. He has examined the funeral papyri which, more or less valuable, are found with each mummy ; he has carefully studied the allegorical signs which represent the judgment of the soul, the good

and evil deeds of which are weighed before Osiris and the forty-twa judges, and thus he has mastered the mysterious beliefs of the Egyptians on the question of the future life. The soul, whether it was conducted to Amenti or driven into the infernal regions — that is, towards the West — by the dog-headed monkeys, who appear to have been a sort of dæmons charged with the carrying out of sentences, — the soul was, nevertheless, not freed from all connection with the body; its relative immortality depended in some sort upon the integrity of the latter; the alteration, the deprivation of one of the limbs was supposed to be felt by the soul, the form of whose impalpable spectre would have been mutilated and could not have traversed, wanting a leg or an arm, the cycle of migrations or metempsychoses. Hence the religious care taken of the human remains, the infallible methods and the minute precautions of the embalmers, the perfect solidity and the secret location of the tombs, of which the priests alone possessed the plan, the constant thought of eternity in death which characterised in so striking a manner the ancient Egyptians and makes them a nation apart, incomprehensible to modern nations, which are generally so eager to give back to

the earth and to cause to disappear the generations which have preceded them.

During his long and intimate acquaintance with Egypt, M. Ernest Feydeau, who is not only an archæologist but also a poet, after he had sounded the mysteries of the old kingdom of the Pharaohs, became passionately attached to that art which the Greek ideal — which nevertheless is indebted to it for more than one lesson — has caused us to despise too much. He has understood, both as a painter and a sculptor, a beauty which is so different from our own standard and which is yet so real.

Hathor, the Egyptian Venus, seems to him as beautiful as the Venus of Milo. Without entirely sharing that feeling, I confess to admiring greatly the clean outline, so pure, so slender, and so full of life. In spite of the hieratic restrictions which did not allow the consecrated attitude to be varied, art shows out in more than one direction. There is a beauty of a strange and penetrating charm foreign to our own habits in the heads with their delicate profiles, their great eyes made larger by the use of antimony, the somewhat thick lips with their faint, dreamy pout, or their vague smile resembling that of the sphinx, in the

rounded cheeks upon which hang broad discs of gold, in the brows shaded by lotus flowers, in the temples framed in by the narrow tresses of the hair, powdered with blue powder, which are shown in funeral processions. How youthful, how fresh, how pure are the tall, slender bodies, the swelling bosoms, the supple waists, the narrow hips of these dancers and musicians who beat time with their long, slender fingers and their long, narrow feet. The Etruscans themselves have never produced anything more light, more graceful, and more elegant upon the bodies of their finest vases, and in more than one famous Greek bas-relief can be recognised attitudes and gestures borrowed from the frescoes of the necropolis and the tombs of Egypt. It is from Egypt also that Greece took, while diminishing their huge size, its Doric and Ionic orders and its Corinthian capital, in which the acanthus takes the place of the lotus flower.

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Portraits of the Day

PORTRAITS OF THE DAY

Introduction

THE present volume consists of a number of articles upon prose writers, poets, painters, actresses, and dancers, contributed by Gautier to various periodicals, reviews, and magazines — *le Figaro*, *la Presse*, *le Moniteur universel*, *le Journal Officiel*, *la Gazette de Paris*, *l'Artiste* — between the years 1837 and 1871. Many of them were originally of greater length, but were abridged when collected in book form and republished in 1874.

The variety of talents which Gautier criticises in these articles has had the advantage of bringing out the breadth and generosity of his judgments. Devoted to the worship and pursuit of art, he is intensely sympathetic towards all who cultivate it. No better recommendation to his favour could be had than love for poetry, painting, or sculpture. He can understand that

men should hold views differing widely from his own; that they should delight in subjects to which he is personally indifferent; that some should prefer line to colour, or colour to line; Greek art to Gothic, the East to the West, modern France to ancient Rome. He does not wish, he does not expect all to conform to his views, to have the same ideal. He has praise for Ingres as for Delacroix, for the spiritual-minded Lamartine as for the sensual Baudelaire. This, be it noted, without yielding up what he believes, what he is convinced is the only true mode of comprehending art and of reproducing beauty. He is broad-minded, kind-hearted, sympathetic; he is willing, nay, desirous to encourage. He seeks for merits rather than defects; he is anxious not to allow his prepossessions or his prejudices to interfere with his judgment; he is genuinely glad to discover reasons for praising artists whose work, on the whole, does not commend itself to him — but he will not sacrifice his essential beliefs, and if he cannot agree with all that he reads, hears, or sees, he will say so plainly. He marks the limitations of painter, poet, or sculptor; he indicates the dangerous tendencies, the false notions, the mistaken practice. Ingres has his share of demerit, as Delaroche has his

portion of reproach; and on the other hand Vernet is praised and Balzac lauded, even though the former is utterly modern and never roams in the fairy realms Gautier revels in, and the latter is absolutely unable to understand the subtle beauty and the melodious charm of verse.

Of course, Balzac was largely a Romanticist, while Gautier tended, not to realism exactly, but to a soberer mode of thought and to a firmer, cleaner, more accurate form of expression than the school of which he had been so illustrious a member, and which was being dethroned in its turn by the followers of Stendhal, Mérimée, and Balzac. Gautier appreciated the admirable work of the latter at a time when praise was but grudgingly conceded to one of the greatest masters of French letters. The realism of Balzac did not shock him; he saw in the stupendous "Comédie humaine" a form of that art which he himself loved so intensely and so faithfully.

In the same way he could and did appreciate so widely different a genius as Lamartine, who appealed to him in a very contrary manner, and Alfred de Vigny, whose reserve and aristocratic pride could not dampen the critic's enthusiasm for the truly noble works of the

soldier-poet. The labours of Gavarni, of Johannot, appeared to him worthy of laudation and notice; he conceived, and rightly, that his business as a critic was to draw attention to talent in danger of being forgotten, and to show what skill, what knowledge, what aptitude were needed to produce the bright illustrations which day after day gave pleasure to thousands of Frenchmen and foreigners.

In a word, the reading of these papers, on subjects so varied, on talents so diverse, has the effect of increasing admiration for Gautier himself. One learns to know better the generous heart that enjoyed bestowing praise, and the upright conscience that refused to compromise on questions of principle. And wonder grows as Gautier's own style changes and varies according to the topic; for it will be noted that the style deepens the impression made by the thoughts, and renders the work criticised more real, more vivid to the reader.

Finally, the volume in itself recalls a brilliant period in the past century. The names which recur in the following pages were household words in very truth; and now that the lapse of time has caused some to be partly forgotten — others, perhaps, to sink into oblivion

— it is pleasant, if a little melancholy, to have those figures brought back, those works recalled, those days revived, and the dazzling triumphs, the heroic struggles, the fierce contests evoked by so magic a pen as Théophile Gautier's.

BÉRANGER

THOUGH he still lived among us and was saluted with respectful glance when he was met walking, he was no longer a contemporary. In these days of rapid living, one does not need to live many years after withdrawing from the battle, in order to be able to estimate one's reputation from the point of view of later generations. Béranger had the satisfaction of knowing, long before going down to the grave, what posterity would think of him, and of passing away sure of his immortality, if indeed such an ambition had arisen within his heart. The men born at the beginning of the century, or somewhat earlier, formed the immediate public of Béranger. Those who belong to the younger generation know him better through having heard his songs sung by their fathers than from singing them themselves; they admire him somewhat on trust, and because of vague remembrances of their childhood. This circumstance is favourable to the poet's reputa-

tion; his claim is admitted, it is no longer discussed, and the general meaning of his work stands out more clearly.

Béranger consoled France in her humiliation; he preserved and revived noble remembrances, and in this respect he truly deserves to be called a national poet; his refrains flew on sonorous wings from lip to lip, and many know them who never read his work. No man was more popular, and in this he obtained what was refused to greater men of higher position than his own.

His talent consisted in enclosing within a narrow framework a clear, thoroughly defined, easily understood thought, and in expressing it in a simple form. He bore in mind the mass of the uneducated, whom French poets are too apt to forget, and who are punished for their disdain by a limited reputation. The uneducated, women, the common people rarely open a volume of verse; they fail to understand lyrical descriptions, complicated rhythms, and learned expressions. What they need especially is a legend, a short drama, an action, a feeling, something human which they are capable of grasping. Béranger knew how to compose. Even his poorest songs are planned, con-

nected; they have a definite aim; they begin, continue, and end logically; in a word, they have a framework like a vaudeville, a novel, a drama. They are not mere effusions, poetic caprices, or unconscious harmonies.

Having settled on his outline and strengthened it, as do certain painters, Béranger filled it in and coloured it, sometimes laboriously, with a firm, clean, accurate touch, without any great warmth of tone, and in that gray tint which is, as it were, the palette of French genius, inimical, in all the arts, to excess, violence, and boldness. Although he voluntarily restricted himself, and often with difficulty, to a *genre* which he raised to a higher level, and which, up to his time, was considered inferior, he ever cared, like a true artist, for rhythm and rime, without, however, making them dominant, as is the case with certain other poets. The rime sound in his work is always full and round, and almost always has its supporting letter. He has even often hit upon rare and happy rimes in this way which contain surprises and satisfy the ear. His verse, occasionally somewhat clumsily constructed, and, as it were, ill at ease through lack of space, — for the *chanson* does not admit of much more than six or eight couplets, the lines of which must not have more than ten

syllables, forming a verse in itself too long and inconveniently divided for singing, — is generally flowing and well constructed, with the cæsura well placed, and infinitely superior to contemporary verse until came the young Romanticist school which elaborated such marvellous rhythms. But although he was lovingly patient and careful in execution, polishing and repolishing in order to efface all traces of joints, he never looked upon that part of the work as anything but secondary. He subordinated everything to his original intention, to the end he aimed at and the effect he sought to produce. Like the dramatic author, who cares less for style than the writer properly so-called, he had, as may be guessed, to cut out many charming things which would have distracted the attention and proved tedious. Few poets have so much courage or common-sense.

Born one of the people, Béranger had all their instincts; he naturally understood and felt their joys, their griefs, their regrets, their hopes, and thus he was thoroughly modern. He did not look for his subjects to antiquity, which he was unacquainted with at first, and which he afterwards affected to ignore. Never having learned Latin, he ingeniously turned this pre-

text to account in order not to write a patchwork of Horace and Virgil. At a time when imitation was all the vogue, he thought for himself, if he did write more like other men, and as criticism did not then attach much importance to songs, he did not suffer from those violent attacks which other budding geniuses had to contend with.

France, as the Revolution of 1830 fully proved, always laid the blame for the disasters of 1815 at the door of the Restoration. The success of Béranger's political songs was therefore immense. He expressed with rare skill the general feeling, and sang aloud what every one whispered low; he spoke of the Man of Fate, of the tricolour, of the Old Sergeant, and besides, enabled the French to make fun of their conquerors, — a service which that brave, proud, and witty people never forgets; for it will put up with anything if it can turn its enemy into ridicule.

In one respect Béranger resembles Charlet, who in his line of art also wrought out the familiar epic of the Grand Army, and represented Napoleon such as the people had seen him, with his small hat and his gray riding-coat. The poet and the painter accomplished something which it is very difficult to manage in a

highly civilised country; they discovered legend in history, and they drew with numberless ineffaceable touches a silhouette which was at once recognisable.

These are doubtless the chief reasons of the great popularity which forever attached itself to Béranger's name; but they are not the only ones. His wit is really French, even Gallic, without any foreign mixture; that is to say, a tempered, playful, humourous wit, of easy morality, of Socratic good-fellowship, something between that of Montaigne and Rabelais, the latter of whom laughs more willingly than he weeps, and yet knows when to temper a smile with a tear. It is not exactly the poetic spirit, such as Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Alfred de Musset have revealed it to us; but lyricism is not part of the genius of our nation. Béranger pleases the greater number, outside of his political opinions, by his ingenious clearness, his somewhat bare sobriety, and his proverbial common-sense, which, so far as I am concerned, come too close to prose. I am willing that the Muse should walk, especially when she wears her pretty cothurns, but I prefer that she should fly away, even at the cost of disappearing in the clouds.

BÉRANGER

There is in Béranger's work a large number of types which he sketched in a few couplets, and which live forever with that vigorous life of art which is much more lasting than real life: the King of Yvetot, Roger Bontemps, the Marquis of Carabas, the Marchioness de Pretintaille, Mistress Grégoire, Frétillon, Lisette,—sparkling etchings, light sketches, pastels done with the tip of the finger, which are worth as much as the most finished painting. You feel that you have met these people as living beings, that you have spoken to them and that they have replied.

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

BORN IN 1799 — DIED IN 1850

I

ABOUT the year 1835 I was living in two small rooms in the blind lane of the Doyenné, nearly on the spot where rises to-day the Pavilion Mollien. Although situated in the centre of Paris opposite the Tuileries, within a couple of steps of the Louvre, the place was wild and deserted, and it certainly took persistence to discover me there. Yet one morning I saw a young gentleman with high-bred manners, with a cordial, clever look, cross my threshold, and apologise for introducing himself. It was Jules Sandeau. He had come from Balzac to secure my services for the *Chronique de Paris*, a weekly newspaper, which some of my readers may remember, but which was not financially successful, as it deserved to be. Balzac, Sandeau told me, had read "Mademoiselle de Maupin," then recently published, and he had greatly admired the author's style. He therefore

much desired to secure my collaboration for the newspaper which he backed and managed. An appointment was made, and from that day began between us a friendship which death alone interrupted.

I mention this, not because it is flattering to me, but because it does honour to Balzac, who, famous already, sent for an obscure young writer who had just entered the literary field, and associated him in his work on a footing of perfect comradeship and equality. At this time, it is true, Balzac was not the author of the "Comédie humaine," but he had written, besides several tales, the "Physiologie du Mariage," the "Peau de Chagrin," "Louis Lambert," "Séraphita," "Eugénie Grandet," the "Histoire des Treize," the "Médecin de Campagne," and "Le Père Goriot," — that is to say, under ordinary circumstances, enough to make five or six men famous. His rising glory, increasing from month to month, already shone with all the splendour of the dawn; and certainly it needed great brilliancy to shine in a heaven where showed at once Lamartine, Victor Hugo, de Vigny, de Musset, Sainte-Beuve, Alexandre Dumas, Mérimée, George Sand, and so many others. But Balzac at no time of his life posed as a literary Grand Lama, and he was always a

kindly companion. He was proud, but was absolutely devoid of conceit.

At that time he lived at the other end of the Luxembourg, near the Observatory, in an unfrequented street called Cassini. On the garden wall which ran almost all the way down the side on which stood the house inhabited by Balzac, were to be read the words, "Absolute, Dealer in Bricks." This curious sign, which still exists, unless I am mistaken, struck him very greatly. It is possible that "La Recherche de l'Absolu," sprang from this. This fateful name probably suggested to the author Balthaser Claës in pursuit of his impossible dream.

When I saw him for the first time, Balzac, who was just one year older than the century, was about thirty-six, and his face was one of those that are never forgotten. In his presence one recalled Shakespeare's words about Cæsar, —

> "Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'"

My heart beat high, for I had never approached without trembling a master of thought, and all the speeches which I had prepared on the way remained unspoken, my only utterance being a stupid phrase,

something like "It is very pleasant to-day." Balzac noted my embarrassment, soon put me at my ease, and during breakfast I regained my coolness enough to examine him carefully.

He wore even then by way of a dressing-gown the cashmere or white-flannel gown belted in by a cord, in which he was painted somewhat later by Louis Boulanger. I do not know what fancy had led him to choose this costume, which he never gave up; perhaps in his eyes it was symbolical of the cloistered life to which his work condemned him, and like a true Benedictine novelist, he had taken the costume of the order. Whatever the reason may have been, the fact remains that the white gown became him uncommonly well. He boasted, as he showed me his clean sleeves, that he had never soiled their purity with the least drop of ink, "for," said he, "the true writer must be clean while at work." The collar of the gown, thrown back, showed his strong bull-neck, as round as a pillar, without apparent muscles, and of a satin-like whiteness which contrasted with the richer complexion of the face. At this time, Balzac, in the prime of his age, exhibited all the signs of robust health, which were not at all in accord with the

fashionable Romanticist pallor and greenness; his thorough-bred Touraine blood flushed his cheeks with a bright purple and gave a warm colour to his kindly, thick, sinuous lips, which smiled readily. A small moustache and a tuft accented the contours without concealing them. The nose, ending squarely, divided into two lobes, cut with well opened nostrils, had a strikingly original and peculiar appearance: so Balzac, when he was posing for his bust, recommended David d'Angers to take care of the nose,—"Take care of my nose; my nose is a whole world." His brow was beautiful, broad, noble, decidedly whiter than the rest of the face, with no other mark than a furrow perpendicular to the root of the nose. The bumps of locality stood out markedly above the brows. His abundant, long, black hair was brushed back like a lion's mane. As for his eyes, there never were any like them; they were filled with intense vitality, light, and magnetism. In spite of his nightly watches, the eyeballs were as pure, limpid, and bluish as those of a child or a maiden, and in them were set two black diamonds lighted at times with rich golden flashes. They were eyes fit to make eagles lower theirs, fit to read through walls and breasts, to still the maddened

wild beast, — the eyes of a king, of a seer, of a tamer.

Madame Émile de Girardin, in her novel entitled "La Canne de M. de Balzac," speaks of those brilliant eyes: "Tancred then perceived that the top of that club was studded with turquoises, set in a marvellously chased gold setting, and behind it he saw two great black eyes more brilliant than the gems themselves."

As soon as one met the glance of these extraordinary eyes, it became impossible to notice any triviality or irregularity in the other features.

The usual expression of his face was a sort of powerful hilarity, of Rabelaisian and monkish joy, and no doubt the gown helped to suggest the thought of Brother Jean des Entommeures, but broadened and elevated by a mind of the first order.

According to his habit, Balzac had risen at midnight and had worked up to the time of my arrival. His face nevertheless showed no fatigue, save a darker line under the eyes, and during the whole breakfast he was madly gay. Little by little the conversation turned to literature; he complained of the frightful difficulty of the French language. Style preoccupied him greatly, and he sincerely believed he did not possess the secret

of it. It is true that at that time he was generally charged with lacking style. The school of Hugo, in love with the sixteenth century and the Middle Ages, learned in cæsuras, rhythms, structures, periods, rich in words and trained to write good prose by a course in the gymnastics of verse, working besides in imitation of a master whose methods were assured, cared only for what was well written, that is, wrought out and coloured to excess, and, besides, considered the depicting of modern manners useless, low, and unlyrical. So Balzac, in spite of the reputation which he began to enjoy with the public, was not admitted among the gods of Romanticism, and he knew it. While his books were read eagerly, their readers did not consider their serious aspect, and even to his admirers he long remained "the most fertile of our romancers" and nothing else. That may surprise modern readers, but I can answer for the accuracy of my statement. Balzac therefore took infinite pains to acquire style, and in his anxiety to be correct, he consulted people who were immeasurably inferior to him. He had, he said, before signing any of his works, written about a hundred volumes under different pseudonyms, — Horace de Saint-Aubin, L. de Villerglé, etc., — in order to get his

hand in; and yet he did possess his own form, although he was not aware of it.

But let us return to the breakfast. While talking, Balzac played with his knife, and I noticed his hands, which were of exquisite beauty, — white, with well-shaped, plump fingers, and rosy, shining nails. He was rather proud of them, and smiled with pleasure when they were looked at; they gave him a feeling of high birth and aristocracy. Byron says in a note, with evident satisfaction, that Ali Pacha complimented him upon his small ears, and inferred therefrom that he was a man of birth. A similar remark about his hands would have flattered Balzac as much, and even more than praise of one of his books. He went so far as to feel a sort of prejudice against those whose hands were not shapely.

The meal was rather choice. A *pâté de foie gras* formed part of it, but this was a breach of his usual frugality, as he observed laughingly; and for this solemn occasion he had borrowed silverware from his publisher.

I withdrew, after having promised to write for the *Chronique de Paris*, in which appeared the "Tour en Belgique," "La Morte amoureuse," "La Chaîne

d'Or," and other literary productions. Charles de Bernard, also invited by Balzac, published in it "La Femme de quarante ans," "La Rose jaune," and a few tales which have appeared since then in book form. Balzac, as is well known, had invented Woman at Thirty; his imitator had added ten years to that already venerable age, and his heroine was none the less successful.

Before we proceed farther, let me stop and give a few details of Balzac's life before I became acquainted with him. My authorities are his sister, Madame de Surville, and himself.

Balzac was born in Tours on May 16, 1799, on Saint Honoré's day; hence his name, which sounded well and seemed of good omen. Little Honoré was not a wonderful child; he did not prematurely foretell that he would write the "Comédie humaine." He was a healthy, blooming boy, fond of play, with bright, gentle eyes, but in no wise different from others save when looked at attentively. At seven years of age, on leaving the day school in Tours, he was sent to the Collège de Vendôme which was under the management of the Oratorians, and where he was considered a very mediocre pupil.

The first part of "Louis Lambert" contains interesting information concerning this portion of Balzac's life. Dividing his own individuality, he has represented himself as a former schoolmate of Louis Lambert, speaking sometimes in his own name and sometimes lending his own sentiments to that imaginary yet very real personage, which is a sort of objective representation of his own soul: —

"Situated in the centre of the town, on the small river Loir which flows at the foot of the buildings, the college forms a broad enclosure in which are contained the usual buildings of an establishment of this sort: a chapel, a theatre, a hospital, a bakery. This college, the most celebrated seat of learning in the central provinces, draws its students from them and the colonies. On account of the distance parents do not come very often to visit their children. Besides, the regulations forbid holidays out of school. Once they have entered, the students remain within the buildings until the end of their studies. With the sole exception of the walks taken outside of the walls under the charge of the Fathers, everything had been arranged to give to this establishment the advantages of conventual discipline. In my day the corrector was still a living remembrance, and the leathern ferule performed its dread work most creditably."

Thus does Balzac represent that formidable school, which left lasting remembrances in his memory. It

would be interesting to compare the tale called "William Wilson," in which Edgar Poe describes, with the mysterious enlargement of childhood, the old Elizabethan building in which his hero was brought up with a companion no less strange than Louis Lambert; but this is not the place to draw the parallel; I am satisfied with suggesting it.

Balzac suffered terribly in that college, where his dreamy nature was oppressed constantly by inflexible rules. He neglected to fulfil his duties, but, favoured by the tacit complicity of a tutor in mathematics, who was librarian and engaged on some transcendental work, he did not take his lesson, and carried off such books as he pleased. His whole time was spent in reading in secret. Before long, therefore, he was the best-punished pupil in the class. Impositions and keeping in soon took up his recreation hours. Punishment inspires in certain boys a sort of stoical feeling of revolt, and they exhibit towards their exasperated teachers the same disdainful impassibility as the captive savage warrior towards the enemies who torture him; neither imprisonment, deprivation of food, nor beatings can draw the least plaint from them. Then occur between the master and the pupil horrible contentions

unknown to the parents, in which the constancy of the martyr equals the skill of the torturer. Some nervous teachers cannot bear the look, full of hatred, contempt, and threat, with which a boy of eight or ten will dare them.

Let me bring together here a few characteristic details which, though related of Louis Lambert, really apply to Balzac: —

"Accustomed to the open air and the freedom of an education left to chance, caressed by the tender care of an old man who cherished him, accustomed to think in bright sunshine, it was very difficult for him to bow to the college regulations, to walk in file, to live between the four walls of a room in which eighty silent lads were seated on wooden benches, each before his own desk. His acuteness of feeling was exquisitely delicate, and he suffered in every part of his being from this life in common. The odours which fouled the air, mingling with the smell of a class-room always dirty and filled with the remains of our breakfasts and lunches, told upon his sense of smell, — that sense which, being more directly related than the others to the nervous system and the brain, is bound to cause by its impairment invisible harm to the organs of thought. Besides these causes of atmospheric corruption, there were in the study-rooms lockers in which each boy put his spoil: pigeons killed for feast-days, or food surreptitiously brought from the refectory. Finally, there was in each of the study-

rooms a huge stone on which reposed at all times two buckets full of water, in which we went every morning in turns to wash our faces and hands in the presence of a master. Cleansed once a day only, before we were awake, the rooms were always filthy. Then, in spite of the number of windows and the door, the air was constantly vitiated by the emanations from the sink, from the lockers, by the numerous industries of each pupil, to say nothing of our eighty bodies crowded together. This sort of *humus* mingling constantly with the mud which we brought in from the courtyards, formed a filth of unbearable odour. The privation of the pure and perfumed air of the country, in which he had lived until then, the change in his habits, the discipline, — everything saddened Lambert. With his head always resting upon his left hand and his arm leaning upon the desk, he passed the study-hours in looking at the foliage of the trees in the court or at the clouds in the sky. He seemed to be studying his lessons, but, noting his pen at rest or his page untouched, the teacher would cry to him, 'You are not working, Lambert.' ''

To this vivid, accurate painting of the sufferings entailed by school life, let me add that other passage in which Balzac, speaking of his dual self under the double name of Pythagoras and the Poet, — the one borne by that half of himself which he has personified in Louis Lambert, the other by his confessed self, —

admirably explains why he passed for a dullard in the eyes of his teachers: —

"Our independence, our illicit occupations, our apparent idleness, the state of numbness in which we remained, our constant punishments, our dislike of tasks and impositions, gained for us the reputation of being cowardly and incorrigible children. Our masters despised us, and we suffered from very dreadful discredit among our comrades, from whom we concealed our forbidden studies through fear of their ridicule. This double contempt, which was unjust as far as the Fathers were concerned, was natural enough in our comrades. We could neither play ball, run, nor walk on stilts in times of amnesty, when by chance we obtained a moment's freedom; we shared none of the pleasures in vogue in the school; we were strangers to the enjoyments of our comrades. We remained alone, sadly seated under a tree in the yard. So the Poet and Pythagoras formed an exception, a life outside the ordinary life. The penetrating instinct, the delicate self-love of schoolboys, made them feel that these were loftier or lower minds than theirs; hence arose in some a hatred of our mute aristocracy, in others contempt for our uselessness. We were not conscious of this state of feelings, and it may be that I have only made it out now. So we lived exactly like two rats, in the corner of the room where were our desks, and where we had to stay both during hours of study and of play."

The result of the secret work, of the meditations which took up the time for study, was that famous

"Treatise on the Will" which is mentioned several times in the "Comédie humaine." Balzac always regretted the loss of that first work, which he has briefly summarised in "Louis Lambert." And he relates, with an emotion which time has not lessened, the confiscation of the box in which the precious manuscript was enclosed. Jealous comrades endeavoured to snatch the box from the two friends, who were defending it ardently.

"Suddenly attracted by the noise of the fight, Father Haugoult intervened abruptly and asked what the dispute was about. The terrible Haugoult ordered us to give him the box. Lambert handed him the key; he took out the papers, glanced at them, and then said as he confiscated them, 'So that is the nonsense for which you neglect your duty!' Great tears fell from Lambert's eyes, drawn from him as much by the consciousness of his wounded moral superiority as by the gratuitous insult and the treachery which had befallen us. Father Haugoult probably sold to a grocer of Vendôme the 'Treatise on the Will,' without knowing the importance of the scientific treasures, the still-born germs of which were lost in ignorant hands."

After this narration, he adds, —

"It was in memory of the catastrophe which happened to Louis' book that, in the work with which these studies begin,

I have used for a fictitious work the title really invented by Louis Lambert, and that I have given the name, Pauline, of a woman whom he loved to a young girl full of devotion."

And, indeed, on opening the "Peau de Chagrin," there is found in Raphael's confession the following sentences: —

"You alone admired my 'Theory of the Will,' that long work in preparation for which I had studied Oriental languages, anatomy, and physiology; to which I devoted the greater part of my time; the work which, unless I am mistaken, will complete the labours of Mesmer, Lavater, Gall, and Bichat, and open a new road to human science. With it stops my beautiful life and that daily sacrifice, that continuous labour unknown to the world, the sole recompense of which lies perhaps in the work itself. Since I came to years of discretion until the day when I finished my 'Theory,' I observed, learned, wrote, read unceasingly, and my life was, as it were, one long imposition. An effeminate lover of Oriental idleness, attached to my dreams, sensually inclined, I have worked unceasingly, denying myself the enjoyments of Parisian life; a gourmand, I have been sober; although I love walking, and travelling by sea, although I longed to visit foreign countries, although I delight even now in making ducks and drakes like a child, I have remained constantly at my desk, pen in hand; fond of conversation, I have gone to listen silently to the professors in the public courses at the Library and the Museum;

I have slept on my solitary couch like a Benedictine monk, and yet woman was my only chimera, — a chimera which I caressed and which ever fled from me."

If Balzac regretted the "Treatise on the Will," he must have felt a good deal less the loss of his epic poem on the Incas, which began thus:

"O Inca, O unfortunate, unhappy king,"

an ill-timed inspiration which gained for him, as long as he remained at school, the nickname of poet. Balzac, it must be owned, never had the gift of poetry, or at least, of versification. His very complex thought was always rebellious to rhythm.

The result of this intense meditation, of these mental efforts, truly prodigious in a child of twelve or fourteen, was a strange illness, a nervous fever, a sort of state of coma, utterly unintelligible to the teachers, who were not aware of the secret reading and work of the young Honoré, apparently idle and stupid. No one in the school suspected his precocious excess of intelligence, or knew that in the school prison, to which he had himself condemned daily in order to be free, the supposedly idle scholar had absorbed a whole library of serious books far above his powers at that

age. Let me here introduce a few interesting passages about the power of reading attributed to Louis Lambert, that is, of course, Balzac : —

"In three years' time Louis Lambert had assimilated the substance of the books in his uncle's library which were worth reading. The absorption of ideas through reading had become in him a curious phenomenon. His eye took in seven or eight lines at a glance, and his mind caught the sense with a speed comparable to that of his glance. Often even a single word sufficed to enable him to draw out the meaning of a whole sentence. His memory was prodigious. He remembered with equal accuracy thoughts acquired by reading and thoughts suggested to him by reflection or conversation. He possessed every form of memory, — for places, names, words, things, faces. Not only could he recall objects at will, but he saw them in his mind lighted up and coloured as they were at the moment when he had perceived them. That power applied equally to the most elusive acts of the understanding. He remembered, to use his own expression, not only where lay thoughts in the book from which he had taken them, but also the state of his soul at distant times."

Balzac preserved that marvellous gift of his youth throughout his life, and increased it. It explains the extent of his work, which is as great as the labours of Hercules.

The frightened teachers wrote to Balzac's parents to

come and fetch him with all speed. His mother hastened to him and took him home to Tours. Great was the astonishment of the family when they beheld the thin, wretched child which the school sent back, instead of the cherub which it had received, and Honoré's grandmother noticed it with pain. Not only had he lost his fine complexion and his plumpness; he seemed, owing to a congestion of ideas, to have become imbecile. His attitude was that of an ecstatic or of a somnambulist asleep with his eyes wide-open, lost in deep reverie; he did not hear what was said to him, or his thoughts, having wandered away, returned too late for him to reply. But open air, rest, the affectionate environment of the family, the distractions which he was forced to indulge in, and the energetic vigour of youth soon triumphed over this sickly state. The tumultuous buzz of ideas in his brain gradually died down; his miscellaneous reading gradually became classified; real images, observations made silently upon actuality, mingled with his abstractions. While walking or playing, he studied the fair landscape of the Loire, the provincial types, the cathedral of Saint-Gatien, and the characteristic faces of priests and canons. Several sketches which were turned to ac-

count later in the great fresco of the "Comédie" were certainly drawn during this period of fruitful inaction. Nevertheless, the family, no more than the school, divined or understood Balzac's intelligence. Indeed, if anything ingenious escaped him, his mother, who nevertheless was a superior woman, would say to him, "I fancy, Honoré, you do not understand what you are saying." And Balzac would laugh, without explaining himself. His father, who had something of Montaigne, of Rabelais, and of Uncle Toby in his philosophy, his eccentricity, and his kindness (it is Mme. de Surville who speaks), had a rather better opinion of his son, on account of certain genetic systems which he had invented and which led him to the conclusion that a child of his could not possibly be a fool. He did not, however, in the smallest degree, suspect that the boy would in the future be a great man.

Balzac's family having returned to Paris, he was sent to the boarding-school of M. Lepitre in the rue Saint-Louis, and then to that of Messieurs Scanzer and Beuzelin, in the rue Thorigny at the Marais. There, as at the Vendôme school, his genius did not manifest itself, and he remained confounded amid the herd of

ordinary pupils. No enthusiastic usher said to him, *Tu Marcellus eris*, or *Sic itur ad astra*.

Having finished his school education, Balzac gave himself that second education which is the true one. He studied, perfected himself, attended the courses at the Sorbonne, and studied law while working in the office of a solicitor and notary. Although this was apparently a waste of time, since Balzac did not become a solicitor, a notary, or a judge, it was nevertheless of value to him, for it made him acquainted with legal people, and enabled him to write later, in a way to amaze professional men, what may be called the legal side of the "Comédie humaine."

Having passed his examinations, the great question of the career to be followed presented itself. His people wanted Balzac to become a notary, but the future great writer, who was conscious of his genius, though no one believed in it, refused most respectfully, although he had the opportunity to enter an office on most favourable conditions. His father gave him a couple of years to show what he could do, and as the family was returning to the provinces, Mme. Balzac installed Honoré in a garret, giving him an allowance scarcely sufficient for the barest needs, and

hoping that a taste of privations would make him wiser.

That attic was in the rue de Lesdiguières, near the Arsenal, the library of which offered its resources to the young student. No doubt, to pass from a home in which he enjoyed abundance and luxury to a wretched garret would be hard at any other time of life than twenty-one, which was Balzac's age; but if the dream of every child is to wear boots, that of every young man is to have a room, a room of his own, of which he has the key in his pocket, even if the room be only large enough for him to stand upright in the middle. A room is the virile toga, is independence, individuality, and love.

So here is Master Honoré, perched aloft, seated before his table, starting to write the masterpiece which was to justify his father's indulgence and to give the lie to the unfavourable predictions of his friends. It is a singular thing that Balzac began with a tragedy, with Cromwell for its subject. Just about that time Victor Hugo was completing his "Cromwell," the preface of which became the manifesto of the young dramatic school.

II

For any one who knew Balzac intimately and who reads attentively the "Comédie humaine," it contains, especially in his earlier works, many interesting details of his character and of his life, when he had not quite yet got rid of his own individuality, and for want of subjects observed and dissected himself. I have said that he began the hard novitiate of the literary life in a garret of the rue de Lesdiguières, near the Arsenal. The tale "Facino Cane," dated Paris, March, 1836, and dedicated to Louise, contains some valuable information of the life which the young aspirant to glory led in his aerial nest: —

"I was then living in a street which you probably do not know, the rue de Lesdiguières. It begins at the rue Saint-Antoine, opposite a fountain, near the Place de la Bastille, and ends in the rue de la Cerisaie. The love of learning had cast me into a garret, where I worked during the night, while I spent the day in a neighbouring library, — that of *Monsieur* (the King's brother). I lived frugally; I conformed to the conditions of that monastic life which is so necessary to the worker. When the weather was fine, I occasionally took a walk on the Boulevard Bourdon. A single passion could draw me from my studious habits, but was not

that passion also a study? I would go to observe the manners of the Faubourg, its inhabitants and their characters. As badly dressed as the workmen, indifferent to decorum, they did not mistrust me; I could mingle with their groups, I could go and watch them bargaining and disputing at the time when they left off work. Observation had already become intuitive with me; it penetrated the soul without neglecting the body, — or rather, it grasped external details so thoroughly that at once it went beyond them. It gave me the power to live the life of the individual upon which I practised it, by enabling me to take his place, as the Dervish in the 'Thousand and One Nights' took the body and soul of people over whom he uttered certain words. When between eleven and midnight I met a workman and his wife returning together from the Ambigu-Comique Theatre, I would amuse myself following them from the Boulevard du Pont-aux-Choux to the Boulevard Beaumarchais. These good people talked first of the play which they had seen; then from one thing to another, they got to their business. The mother pulled the child by the hand without listening to its plaints or its requests. The pair reckoned up the money which would be paid them the next day; they spent it in twenty different ways; then would come household details, grumblings at the excessive price of potatoes, or at the length of the winter and the increasing cost of living, energetic remonstrances about what was due the baker, and finally discussions which grew bitter and in which each exhibited his or her character in picturesque

expression. As I listened to these people, I could adopt their life, I felt their clothes on my back, I walked in their shoes full of holes. Their desires, their needs, everything, passed into my soul, and my soul passed into theirs ; it was the dream of a man wide-awake. I got hot with them against the foreman who tyrannised over them, or against the bad-paying client who made them return several days without settling up. To abandon my own habits, to become another self by the intoxication of moral faculties, to play the game out, — such was my enjoyment. To what do I owe this gift, this second sight ? Is it one of those qualities the abuse of which would lead to madness ? I have never inquired into the source of this power ; I possess it and use it, that is all.''

I have transcribed these lines, doubly interesting because they illumine a little-known side of Balzac's life, and exhibit in him the consciousness of that powerful intuitive faculty without which the completion of his work would have been impossible. Balzac, like Vishnu, the Indian god, possessed the gift of avatar, that is, of incarnating himself in different bodies and of living as long as he pleased in them. Only, the number of Vishnu's avatars is fixed at ten ; the avatars of Balzac are innumerable, and besides he could produce them at will. Strange as it may seem to us in this nineteenth century of ours, Balzac was a seer ; his gift of observa-

tion, his physiological perspicuity, his literary genius do not suffice to explain the infinite variety of the two or three thousand types which play a more or less important part in the "Comédie humaine." He did not copy them, he lived them in his mind, he put on their dress, he assumed their habits, he entered their surroundings, he was themselves as long as necessary. Hence these consistent, logical beings which never contradict themselves, which are endowed with such a deep, genuine life, which — to make use of one of his expressions — compete with the official records of men's lives. Real red blood flows in their veins, instead of the ink which ordinary authors introduce into their creations. But, on the other hand, Balzac possessed that faculty in regard to the present only. He could transport himself in thought into the marquis, the financier, the *bourgeois*, the man of the people, the courtesan, but the shades of the past did not answer his call. He never was able, like Goethe, to evoke Fair Helen from the depths of antiquity and make her dwell within Faust's Gothic manor. With two or three exceptions, his whole work is modern. He assimilated the living; he could not resuscitate the dead. History itself tempted him but little, as may

be seen by a paragraph in the Introduction to the "Comédie humaine: —"

"As one reads the dry and dull nomenclatures of facts called histories, who is there that does not perceive that writers in Egypt, in Persia, in Greece, at Rome, have always forgotten to give us the history of manners? The passage of Petronius about the private life of the Romans irritates rather than satisfies our curiosity."

The blank left by the historians of vanished societies, Balzac proposed to fill up as far as ours was concerned; and every one knows how faithfully he carried out the programme which he had laid out for himself:

"Society was to be the historian, I the secretary merely. By drawing up the inventory of vices and virtues, by collecting the principal facts of passions, by depicting characters, selecting the chief features in society, composing types by combining the traits of several homogeneous characters, I might perhaps manage to write a history forgotten by so many historians, — that of manners. With much patience and courage I might compose about France in the nineteenth century the book which we all regret, which Rome, Venice, Tyre, Memphis, Persia, India, have unfortunately not left us concerning their civilisations, and which, in imitation of the Abbé Barthélemy, the courageous and patient Monteil tried to write about the Middle Ages, but in a not very attractive form."

Let us return to the garret of the rue de Lesdiguières. Balzac had not yet thought out the plan of the work which was to immortalise him. He was still seeking his way uneasily, laboriously, with much effort, trying everything, succeeding in nothing; yet he already possessed that obstinacy of work to which Minerva, however rebellious she may prove, is bound to yield to some day or another. He sketched comic operas, drew up plans of dramas and novels, of which Mme. de Surville has preserved the titles for us: "Stella," "Coqsigrue," "Les deux Philosophes," to say nothing of the terrible "Cromwell," the lines of which cost him so much trouble, and were not much better than the line with which began his epic poem on the Incas.

Imagine young Honoré, his legs wrapped up in a patched carrick, the upper portion of his body protected by an old shawl of his mother's, on his head a sort of Dante-like cap, of which Mme. Balzac alone possessed the pattern, his coffee-pot on his left, his ink-bottle on his right, ploughing away with bowed brow, like an ox at the plough, the stony and untouched field of thought in which later he cut such fruitful furrows. His lamp shone like a star in the darkened house, the snow fell

silently on the tiles, the wind blew through the door and window, "like Julou in his flute, but less agreeably."

If any belated passer-by had looked up to that obstinately flickering little light, he would certainly not have suspected that it was the dawn of one of the greatest glories of our age. Here is a sketch of the place, transposed, it is true, but very accurate, drawn by the author himself in the "Peau de Chagrin," the work in which he has put so much of himself: —

"A room which looked out upon the yards of the neighbouring houses, from the windows of which stuck out long poles covered with clothes. Nothing could be more hideous than that garret with its dirty, yellow walls, that smelled of wretchedness and called for a scholar. The roof sloped down evenly, and the disjointed tiles allowed the sky to be seen. There was room enough for a table, a few chairs, and under the gable of the roof I could put my piano. I lived in that aerial sepulchre for nearly three years, working night and day, without stop or stay, with so much pleasure that study seemed to me the most beautiful thing, the successful solution of human life. The calm and silence which a scholar needs have a sweetness and an intoxication comparable to that of love. Study lends a sort of magic to all that surrounds us. The mean desk on which I wrote and the brown stuff which covered it, my piano, my bed, my armchair, the quaint design of the paper on the wall, my furniture, all these things became

living and humble friends of mine, the silent helpers of my future. How many a time have I not put my soul into them as I gazed upon them? As my eyes wandered along the broken moulding, I would come upon new ideas, upon a proof of my system, or words which I thought happily rendered inexpressible ideas."

In the same passage he alludes to his work: —

"I had undertaken an important piece of work, a play, which was very shortly to bring me renown, wealth, and entrance into that world in which I proposed to satisfy myself in the practice of the royal rights of a man of genius. You all took that masterpiece for the first mistake of a young fellow who had just left college, a child's folly. Your jokes killed fruitful lines which have never again reappeared."

We recognise here the unfortunate "Cromwell," which, having been read to the family and its friends in solemn assembly, proved a complete failure. Honoré appealed from that sentence to an arbiter whom he accepted as competent, a kind old man, formerly a professor in the Polytechnic School. The verdict was that the author had better try anything at all except literature. What a loss for letters, what a blank in the human mind, if the young man had bowed to the experience of his elder and taken his advice! Yet it certainly was very sound, for there

was not the least spark of genius, or even talent, visible in that rhetorical tragedy.

Happily, Balzac, under the pseudonym of Louis Lambert, had not written in vain the "Theory of the Will" at the College of Vendôme. He accepted the verdict, but merely as regarded tragedy. He understood that he must not hope to walk in the footsteps of Corneille and Racine, whom he then admired on trust, for never were there geniuses more different from his own. The novel offered him a more convenient mould, and he wrote at that time a great number of books which he did not sign and which he always disavowed. The Balzac whom we know and admire was still in limbo, and was vainly striving to emerge. Those who considered him fit to be a clerk only were apparently right, but perhaps even that resource would have failed him, for his fine hand must have already been spoiled by the writing of the crumpled, scratched, re-written, almost hieroglyphic drafts of the writer struggling with his idea and utterly careless of the form of his letters.

So nothing had come from that rigorous claustration, from that hermit life in the Thebaïd of which Raphael gives us the budget : —

"Three sous' worth of bread, two sous' worth of milk, and three sous' worth of pork meat kept me from starvation, and maintained my brain in a state of singular lucidity. My lodging cost me three sous a day; I burned three sous' worth of oil a night; I made my own room and wore flannel shirts in order not to spend more than two sous a day at the laundry. I warmed my room with coal, the price of which, divided by the number of days in the year, never amounted to more than two sous a day. I had clothes, linen, and shoes enough to last me three years; I made up my mind to dress only when I went to certain public lectures and to the libraries. My total expenses amounted to eighteen sous, — that left me two sous for unforeseen matters. I do not remember, during that long period of work, crossing the Pont des Arts or purchasing any water."

No doubt Raphael somewhat exaggerates the economy, but Balzac's letters to his sister show that the novel is not very far from the truth. The old woman who figures under the title of Iris the Messenger, and who was seventy, could not be a very active housekeeper, so we find Balzac writing: —

"The news from my household is disastrous. Work interferes with cleanliness. That rascal Ego is more and more neglectful of himself. He goes out every three or four days for purchases, goes to the nearest and least well stocked shops in the neighbourhood; the others are too far, and my

lad at least saves shoe leather. So that your brother, who is destined to become so famous, is fed exactly like a great man, that is, he is starving.

"Another misfortune is that the coffee makes dreadful stains on the floor. It takes a great deal of water to repair the damage. Now as water does not come up to my *heavenly* garret, — it only comes down to it in rain storms, — I shall have to think, after purchasing the piano, of setting up a hydraulic machine, if my coffee continues to leak while master and servant are gaping."

Elsewhere, keeping up the joke, he scolds the lazy Ego, who leaves cobwebs hanging from the ceiling, flocks of dirt blowing under the bed, and a blinding dust covering the windows. In another letter he says, "I have eaten two melons. I shall make up for this by eating nuts and dry bread."

One of the few enjoyments he allowed himself was to go to the Botanical Garden or to the cemetery of Père-Lachaise. From the summit of the cemetery hill he overlooked Paris, as did de Rastignac at the funeral of old Goriot. His eye ranged over the sea of slates and tiles which concealed so much luxury, so much misery, so many intrigues, so many passions. Like a young eagle, he gazed upon his prey, but he had yet neither wings nor beak nor talons, although

his eye could look straight at the sun. He used to say, as he looked at the tombs: "There are no fine epitaphs save these, — La Fontaine, Massenet, Molière, — a single name which tells everything and which makes you think."

Those words were inspired by a vague, prophetic presentiment, which, alas! was realised too soon. On the slope of the hill, upon a tombstone below a bronze bust modelled after the marble bust by David, the single word "Balzac" tells everything and makes the solitary stroller reflect.

The dietetic regimen recommended by Raphael might favour lucidity of the brain, but certainly it was very bad for a young man accustomed to a comfortable family life. Fifteen months spent under these intellectual leads, more gloomy, unquestionably, than the leads of Venice, had turned the fresh-coloured youth from Tours, with his satiny, bright cheeks, into a pale, yellow Parisian skeleton, almost unrecognisable. Balzac returned to his father's home, where the fatted calf was killed for the return of that most unprodigal son.

I shall pass rapidly over that part of his life during which he endeavoured to secure independence by spec-

ulating in the publishing business; the lack of capital alone preventing his being successful. His attempt got him into debt, mortgaged his future, and, in spite of the earnest but perhaps somewhat dilatory help of his family, weighed him down with that rock of Sisyphus which he pushed so often up to the edge of the plateau, and which ever fell back crushingly upon his Atlas-like shoulders, that bore the whole world besides. His debts, which he considered it a sacred duty to pay, for they represented the fortune of people who were dear to him, proved to be Necessity with her knotted whip, with her hand full of bronze nails, that worried him night and day without stay, and made him look upon an hour's rest or distraction as a theft. It weighed painfully upon his whole life, and often made it unintelligible to any one not in the secret. And now these indispensable biographical details have been given, let me come to my direct and personal impressions of Balzac.

Balzac, with his mighty brain, Balzac, who was so penetrating a physiologist, so close an observer, Balzac, who had so much intuition, did not possess the literary gift. In him there was a great gulf fixed between thought and its expression. In his earlier days he

despaired of ever crossing it. He threw into it, without ever filling it up, volume after volume, night-watch after night-watch, essay after essay; a whole library full of disowned books went into it. A man of less determined will would have been discouraged over and over again, but happily Balzac had an unshakable trust in his genius, as yet unrecognised. He had resolved to become a great man, and he became one by incessantly projecting that fluid more powerful than electricity, which he has so subtly analysed in "Louis Lambert." In contradistinction to the writers of the Romanticist School, who were all noted for amazing completeness and fertility of execution, and who brought forth their fruits almost at the same time as their flowers, the bloom being, as it were, almost involuntary with them, Balzac, who equalled them all as a genius, could not find a way to express himself, or rather found it only after infinite trouble. Hugo said in one of his prefaces, with that Castilian pride of his, "I do not possess the art of putting a beauty in the place of a defect, and I correct myself in another work." But Balzac covered with erasures as many as ten different proofs, and when he saw me send back to the *Chronique de Paris* the proof of an

article written straight off on the corner of a table without any more than typographical corrections, he could not believe, however pleased with it he might otherwise be, that I had put all my talent into it. "If you had worked it over two or three times more, it would have been better," he would say.

Setting himself up as an example, he would preach to me the strangest literary hygiene. I ought to shut myself up for two or three years, drink water, and eat lupins as did Protogenes; go to bed at six in the evening, rise at midnight, and work until morning; spend the day in revising, extending, cutting down, perfecting, polishing the work of the night before, correcting the proofs, taking notes, making the necessary studies, and especially live in the most absolutely chaste manner. He insisted at great length on this last recommendation, — a harsh one for a young man of twenty-four or twenty-five. In his opinion, real chastity developed the natural powers in the highest degree, and gave to those who practised it unsuspected power. I objected timidly that the greatest geniuses had not forbidden themselves love or passion, or even pleasure, and I would cite illustrious names. Balzac would shake his head and answer, "They would have

done far greater things if they had kept away from women."

The single concession that he would allow, and regretfully at that, was a half-hour's interview with the beloved person each year. He allowed letters, — "they formed the style."

He promised, if I would subject myself to this regimen, to make of me, with the natural talent which he was good enough to accord me, a writer of the first rank. It will readily be seen by my work that I have not followed that very wise plan of study.

It must not be imagined that Balzac was joking when laying down a rule which Trappists and Carthusians would have thought hard; he was truly convinced, and spoke with such eloquence that I several times conscientiously tried this method of acquiring genius. I rose several times at midnight, and after having drunk the inspiring coffee, brewed in accordance with the formula, I sat down before my table, on which sleep very soon bowed my head. The "Morte amoureuse," published in the *Chronique de Paris*, was my single nocturnal work.

At about this time Balzac had written for a review "Facino Cane," the story of a Venetian noble who,

imprisoned in the dungeons of the Ducal Palace, had fallen by accident into the secret treasury of the Republic, a large portion of which he had carried off with the assistance of a jailer he had bribed. Facino Cane, who had become blind, and who played the clarinet under the vulgar name of Father Canet, had preserved in spite of his infirmity a second sight, so far as gold was concerned. He could divine its existence through walls and vaults, and he offered the author at a wedding in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine to guide him, if he would pay his travelling expenses, to that vast mass of riches of which the fall of the Venetian Republic had caused the location to be forgotten. Balzac, as I have said, lived in his characters, and at that moment he was Facino Cane himself, bar blindness, for never did more brilliant eyes flash in a human face. So he was dreaming only of barrels of gold, of heaps of diamonds and carbuncles, and by means of magnetism, with which he had long been familiar, he made somnambulists seek out the place of buried and lost treasure. He claimed to have thus learned, in the most accurate manner, the spot where, near the mountain of Pointe-à-Pitre, Toussaint l'Ouverture had buried his gold with the help of negroes who

were at once shot down. Poe's "Gold Bug" does not come up in cleverness of induction, in clearness of plan, in the divination of details, to the feverish recital which he made to me of the expedition to be attempted in order to become possessors of this treasure, which was far richer than that buried by Kidd at the foot of the tulip tree with the death's head.

I beg the reader not to laugh at me if I humbly confess that I soon shared Balzac's belief. What brain could have resisted his amazing speech? Jules Sandeau also was soon seduced, and as two sure friends, two devoted, robust comrades were needed to dig at night on the spot indicated by the somnambulists, Balzac was kind enough to give each of us a fourth share of that prodigious wealth. One half was to be his, however, by right, as the discoverer and director of the undertaking.

We were to purchase pickaxes, crowbars, and shovels, to embark them secretly on board a ship, to reach the place indicated by different ways so as not to excite suspicion, and having managed the business, to ship our riches on a barque chartered beforehand. In a word, it was a perfect novel, which would have been wonderful if Balzac had only written it instead

of speaking it. Needless to say, we did not dig up Toussaint l'Ouverture's treasure, for we had not the money to pay for our passage, there being scarcely enough between the three of us to buy the pickaxes. The dream of sudden wealth, due to some strange and marvellous cause, often haunted Balzac's brain. A few years before (in 1833) he had made a trip to Sardinia to examine the refuse of the silver mines abandoned by the Romans, which, having been treated by imperfect processes, must still, in his opinion, contain a great deal of metal. The idea was sound, and, imprudently imparted by him, made another man's fortune.

III

I HAVE related the anecdote of Toussaint l'Ouverture's buried treasure, not for the pleasure of relating an amusing story, but because it is connected with the master-thought of Balzac, — money. Assuredly no one was less mercenary than the author of the "Comédie humaine," but his genius made him foresee the mighty part which this metallic hero was to play in art, — a hero more interesting to modern society than the Grandisons, the Des Grieux, the Oswalds, the

Werthers, the Malek-Adhels, the Renés, Laras, Waverleys, Quentin Durwards, and others. Up to this time novelists had been content to depict a single passion, that of love, but love in an ideal sphere, beyond the necessities and the small wants of life. The characters in these wholly psychological tales neither ate, drank, nor lodged anywhere; they had no account with their tailor; they lived, moved, and had their being in an environment as abstract as that of tragedy. If they proposed to travel, they took no passport, but put a few handfuls of diamonds into their pocket and paid in that currency postilions who never failed to founder their horses at every relay. Mansions of vague architecture received them at the end of their travel, and they wrote with their blood interminable letters, dated from the Northern Tower, to their loves. The heroines, no less immaterial, resembled Angelica Kauffman's *aqua-tintas*. They wore great straw hats, hair curled in English fashion, and long dresses of white muslin bound at the waist with a blue scarf.

His deep feeling for reality made Balzac understand that the modern life he desired to depict was dominated by one great fact, — money; and in the "Peau de Chagrin" he was courageous enough to represent a

lover anxious not only to know whether he has touched the heart of the woman he loves, but also whether he will have money enough to pay the cab in which he is taking her home. This is perhaps the greatest boldness which any man has allowed himself in literature, and it would alone suffice to make Balzac immortal. The amazement it created was profound, and purists grew wroth at this infraction of the laws of the novel; but all the young fellows who, going to spend an evening with a lady, wore white gloves which had been cleaned with rubber, had traversed Paris like dancers on the tips of their shoes and feared a splash of mud more than a pistol shot, sympathised, because they had felt it, with the anguish of Valentin, and were doubly interested in the hat which he cannot replace and which he preserves with solicitous care. At times of greatest want, the discovery of one of the five-franc pieces slipped between the papers in the drawer by the modest sympathy of Pauline produced the effect of the most romantic, startling situation on the stage, or of the intervention of a Peri in Arabian tales. Who is there that has not discovered in a day of distress, forgotten in his trousers pocket or in a vest, a noble crown-piece which turned up exactly at the right time

and saved one from the misfortune which a youth most dreads, — the inability, when with the woman he loves, to pay for a carriage, a bouquet, a footstool, a theatre programme, to tip the box-opener, or some such trifle?

Balzac, besides, excels in depicting youth, poor as it almost always is, engaged in its first struggle with life, a prey to the temptations of pleasure and luxury, but bearing up under great poverty, thanks to its high hopes. Valentin, Rastignac, Bianchon, d'Arthez, Lucien de Rubempré, Lousteau, have all eaten the hard bread of poverty, — a strengthening food for a robust stomach, but indigestible for weak ones. Balzac does not lodge all those handsome young fellows without a sou in conventional garrets hung with chintz, with windows festooned with sweet peas and looking out upon gardens; he does not make them eat "simple dishes prepared by the hands of nature;" he does not clothe them in plain but convenient garments. He puts them into a common boarding-house, such as Mother Vauquer's, or sticks them under the arch of a roof, makes them lean on the greasy tables of the meanest eating-houses, clothes them in black coats with whitened seams, and is not afraid to send them to

the pawn-shop if they still possess — which is not usual, — their father's watch.

O Corinne, you who on Cape Miseno let your snow-white arm hang upon your ivory lyre while the son of Albion, draped in a splendid new cloak and wearing boots beautifully polished, contemplates and listens to you in an elegant attitude, — what would you, Corinne, have said of such heroes? Yet they possess a quality which Oswald lacks, — they live a life so real that one feels as if one had met them many a time. No wonder, then, that Pauline, Delphine de Nucingen, the Princess de Cadignan, Madame de Bargeton, Coralie, Esther are madly in love with them.

At the time when the first novels signed by Balzac appeared, people did not long for — or rather, feverishly covet — gold as they do now. California was yet to be discovered; there scarcely existed more than a few miles of railways; the future development of this form of transportation was not foreseen, and railways were looked upon as something like slides which were to take the place of the switchbacks, that had fallen into desuetude. The public was, so to speak, ignorant of what is now called business, and bankers alone speculated on 'Change. The turning over of capital,

the stream of gold, the calculations, the arithmetic, the importance given to money in works which were even then accepted as merely romantic fictions, and not as serious paintings of life, greatly astounded subscribers to circulating libraries, and critics summed up the amounts expended or staked by the author. The millions of Father Grandet gave rise to arithmetical discussions, and serious people, moved by the enormous totals, doubted the financial capacity of Balzac, — a very remarkable capacity, nevertheless, as was later recognised. Stendhal said, with a sort of disdainful conceit of style, "Before writing I always read three or four pages of the Civil Code to get my tone." Balzac, who understood money so well, also discovered poems and dramas in the Code. The "Contrat de Mariage," in which he contrasts, under the characters of Matthias and Solonnet, the old and the new style of lawyer, is as interesting as the most exciting comedy of cloak and sword. The story of the bankruptcy in the "Grandeur et Décadence de César Birotteau," is as absorbing as the narrative of the fall of an empire; the fight between the castle and the peasant's hut in the "Paysans," is as full of alternations as the siege of Troy. Balzac knows how to impart life to an estate,

to a house, to an inheritance, to capital; he makes them into heroes and heroines, whose adventures are read with feverish anxiety.

These elements thus newly introduced into the novel did not at first please readers. The philosophical analysis, the detailed descriptions of characters, the accounts so minute that they seemed meant for posterity, were looked upon as regrettably diffuse, and usually were skipped by the reader eager to reach the end of the story. Later on it was seen that the author's main object was not to weave more or less complicated plots, but to depict the whole of society from top to bottom, the members of it, and their abodes; then the immense variety of his types was admired. Was it not Alexandre Dumas who said: "Shakespeare, the man who, next to God, has been the greatest creator"? This would be far more correct applied to Balzac, for never indeed did so many living creatures emerge from a human brain.

At this time (1836) Balzac had already conceived the plan of his "Comédie humaine" and was fully conscious of his own genius. He skilfully connected the works which had already appeared with his general idea, and found a place for them in the categories

which he made up systematically. Some purely fanciful tales are unquestionably not in full harmony with it, in spite of the joinings which he made subsequently, but these details are lost in the vastness of the mass, like architectural remains in a different style in a splendid edifice.

I have said that Balzac worked with difficulty, and, determined to do well, would throw back a dozen times into the crucible the metal which had not accurately filled the mould. Like Bernard Palissy, he would have burned his furniture, the floor, and even the beams of his house, to keep up the fire of his furnace so that the experiment should not fail. The most pressing necessity never drove him to allow the publication of a book on which he had not expended his utmost efforts, and he repeatedly gave proof of admirable literary conscientiousness. His corrections, so numerous that they almost amounted to different editions of the same idea, were charged against him by the publishers, whose profits were absorbed by them, and his remuneration, often small considering the value of the work and the labour it had cost him, was diminished by so much. The promised payments were not always made when due, and in order to meet

what he laughingly called his floating debt, Balzac displayed prodigious resources of mind and an activity which would have completely filled the life of an ordinary man. But when, seated before his table in his monk's robe in the silence of the night, he found himself with white leaves on which fell the light of his seven candles concentrated by a green shade, when he took up the pen, he forgot everything, and then began a struggle more terrible than that of Jacob with the angel, the struggle between the form and the idea. In these nightly battles from which he emerged every morning worn but victorious, when the cold hearth on which the fire had gone out cooled the atmosphere of the room, his head smoked and from his body rose a steam as visible as that which rises from the bodies of horses in winter. Sometimes a single phrase took up the whole night. It was written, re-written, twisted, kneaded, hammered, lengthened, shortened, put in a hundred different ways, and, strange to say, the necessary, the absolute form came only after all approximate forms had been exhausted. No doubt the metal flowed often in a fuller, richer way, but there are very few pages in Balzac's works which remain as he first wrote them.

His way of working was this: When he had a long time borne and lived a subject within himself, he jotted on a few pages in a rapid, broken, erratic, almost hieroglyphic hand a sort of *scenario*, which he sent to the printer, who returned the pages in the shape of posters, — that is, of single galleys in the centre of large sheets. He read carefully those posters, which already gave to his work in embryo that impersonal character which manuscript does not possess, and he applied to this first sketch the powerful critical faculty he possessed, judging his own writing as if the work were another man's. He had something to work on then, he approved or disapproved, he maintained or he corrected, but mostly he added. Lines, starting from the beginning, the middle or the end of sentences, went off to the margin on the right, the left, the top and the bottom, leading to developments, to intercalations, to inserts, to epithets, to adverbs. After a few hours' work, the page looked like a final burst of fireworks drawn by a child. From the original text sprang rockets of style which exploded in every direction. Then there were simple crosses, and crosses recrossed, like those of heraldry, stars, suns, Arabic or Roman numerals, Greek or French letters, all

imaginable signs of reference which mingled with the lines. Strips of paper pasted on with wafers or stuck on with pins, were added to margins that proved insufficient, and rayed with lines, in fine writing to save room,—lines which were themselves full of corrections, for one was scarcely made than it was again improved upon. The printed poster disappeared almost altogether in the centre of this cabalistic-looking scrawl, which compositors passed to each other, none of them being willing to work longer than one hour at a time at Balzac's manuscript. The next day the printer sent back the posters, which, the corrections having been made, were already twice as numerous as before. Balzac set to work again, still developing, adding a trait, a detail, a picture, some remark on manners, a characteristic expression, a striking sentence, compelling the form to render the idea more closely, getting ever closer to the thought in his mind, choosing, as does a painter, the final line out of three or four contours. Often after he had finished that terrific work, with that intensity of attention of which he alone was capable, he would perceive that he had failed to express his thought, that an episode was too prominent, that a figure which he

intended to be secondary in the general effect stood out too prominently, and with one stroke of the pen he would courageously destroy the result of four or five nights of labour. He was really heroic under such circumstances.

Six, seven, sometimes ten proofs came back, deleted, worked over, before Balzac's desire for perfection was satisfied. I have seen at the Jardies, on the shelves of a library composed exclusively of his own works, every different proof of the same book, from the first draft to the final printed book, bound in a separate volume. A comparison of the thought of Balzac in its different states would be a very interesting study, and would teach valuable lessons in literature. Near these volumes a sinister-looking book bound in black morocco, without tooling or gilding, drew my attention. "Take it," said Balzac; "it is an unpublished work which is of some value." The title was "Melancholy Accounts." The book contained a list of debts, dates when notes fell due, the amounts given tradesmen, and all the frightful papers which the Stamp Office legalises. This volume, through a sort of quizzical contrast, was placed side by side with the "Contes drôlatiques," "of which it is not the continua-

tion," laughingly added the author of the "Comédie humaine."

In spite of his laborious method of work, Balzac produced a great deal, thanks to his superhuman will, which was served by his athletic temperament and his monkish mode of life. For two or three months at a time, when he had some important work under way, he wrote for sixteen to eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. He gave to the body six hours only of a heavy, feverish, convulsive sleep, brought on by the torpor of digestion after a hastily eaten meal. At such times he disappeared completely, his best friends lost track of him; but he soon emerged from under ground, waving a masterpiece above his head, laughing with that hearty laugh of his, applauding himself with perfect artlessness, and bestowing on himself praise which I am bound to say he never sought of any one. No author cared less than he did about the reviews and notices of his books. He allowed his reputation to grow up of itself without helping it on, and he never paid court to newspaper men. Besides, that would have taken up his time. He delivered his copy, drew his money, and hastened to distribute it to creditors who often waited for him in the yard of

the newspaper office, as did, for instance, the builder of the Jardies.

Sometimes he would come to my rooms in the morning, breathless, exhausted, dazed by the fresh air, like Vulcan escaping from his forge. He would throw himself on a divan. His long night-watches had made him hungry, and he would crush sardines in butter, making a sort of pomade which recalled to him the Tours *rillettes*, and which he spread upon slices of bread. That was his favourite dish. No sooner had he dined than he would fall asleep, asking me to awaken him in an hour's time. Disregarding his request, I would respect his well-earned sleep and take care that no noise was made in the house. But when Balzac awoke and saw the twilight spreading its grey shadows throughout the heavens, he would spring up and overwhelm me with insults, calling me traitor, robber, and murderer; I had made him lose ten thousand francs, for if I had awakened him, he might have thought of a novel which would have brought in that amount, to say nothing of the profits from subsequent editions. I was the cause of the gravest catastrophes and of unmentionable disorders; I had made him miss appointments with bankers, publishers, and duchesses;

he would not be prepared now to pay his notes when they came due; that fatal sleep would cost him millions. But I was already accustomed to the prodigious arithmetical sums which Balzac, starting from the smallest amounts, carried on to the most startling totals, and I was easily consoled on seeing his fine colour reappear upon his rested face.

Balzac at that time was living at Chaillot, rue des Batailles, in a house from which there was a lovely prospect, — the Seine, the Champ de Mars, the dome of the Invalides, a large portion of Paris, and in the distance the hills of Meudon. He had furnished the house rather luxuriously, for he knew that in Paris a man of talent who is poor is not much believed in, and that the appearance of wealth often brings the reality. It was at this time that he indulged in elegance and dandyism, that he wore his famous blue coat with buttons of massive gold, that he carried the enormous stick with its turquoise top, that he went to the Bouffes and the Opera, and appeared more frequently in society, where his brilliant high spirits made him always most welcome, — a frequentation which, besides, he turned to account, for in the course of his visits he came upon more than one model. It was not easy to

enter his house, which was better guarded than ever was the Garden of the Hesperides. Two or three pass-words were necessary, and Balzac often changed them for fear they should become known. I can remember some. You had to say to the porter, "The plum season has come," and he allowed you to cross the threshold. To the servant who answered the bell you had to whisper, "I am bringing Belgian lace." If you could assure the valet that "Madame Bertrand was in good health," you were at last introduced. This nonsense greatly delighted Balzac. It may have been necessary to keep away bores and other visitors still more disagreeable. In the "Fille aux yeux d'or," there is a description of the drawing-room in the house of the rue des Batailles. It is scrupulously accurate, and the reader may be interested in an account of the lion's den by the lion himself. Not a single detail has been added or omitted: —

"One half of the boudoir formed a softly graceful circular line which contrasted with the perfectly square other half, in the centre of which stood a mantelpiece in white marble and gold. The entrance was through a side door concealed by a rich portière of tapestry, opposite a window. The horse-shoe end was furnished with a real Turkish divan, — that is, a

mattress thrown on the ground, but a mattress as broad as a bed; a divan fifty feet in length, of white cashmere ornamented with puffs of black and crimson silk arranged in lozenges. The back of this huge bed rose several inches above the cushions, which made it still richer by the tastefulness of their ornamentation. The boudoir was hung with a red stuff, over which was laid Indian muslin fluted like Corinthian columns, the fluting alternately concave and convex, and held in at the top and bottom by a band of crimson-coloured stuff on which were drawn black arabesques. Under the muslin the crimson turned to rose-colour, an amorous colour, repeated by the window curtains, which were of Indian muslin lined with rose taffeta and adorned with crimson and black fringes. Six silver-gilt bracket candelabra, each bearing a wax taper, were fixed to the hangings at equal distances to give light to the divan. The ceiling, from the centre of which hung a dulled silver-gilt chandelier, was of sparkling whiteness. The cornice was gilded. The carpet resembled an Oriental shawl, the pattern of which it reproduced, and it recalled the poetry of the Persian land where it had been wrought by the hands of slaves. The furniture was covered with white cashmere, relieved by black and crimson ornaments. The clock and candelabra were of white marble. The only table in the room was covered with a cashmere shawl; elegant flower-stands held roses of all kinds, and white or red flowers."

I may add that on the table stood a superb inkstand in gold and malachite, no doubt the gift of some admirer.

It was with childish satisfaction that Balzac showed me this boudoir, made out of a square drawing-room, and necessarily leaving empty places in the corners of the rounded half. When I had sufficiently admired the coquettish splendour of the room, the luxury of which would not strike one so much to-day, Balzac opened a secret door and led me into a dark passage behind the hemicycle. At one of the corners was a narrow iron bedstead; in the other there was a table "with all necessary materials for writing," as M. Scribe says in his stage directions. It was there that Balzac took refuge in order to work safe from any surprise and any investigation.

The partition was covered with several thicknesses of cloth and paper so as to cut off any sound from one side or the other. In order to be certain that none could reach him from the drawing-room, Balzac asked me to go back into the room and shout as loud as I could. He could still hear me a little, so more gray paper had to be pasted on to completely deaden the sound. All these mysterious ways greatly puzzled me, and I asked the reason of them. Balzac gave me a reason which Stendhal would have approved, but which modern prudery prevents my repeating. The fact is

that he was already weaving in his mind the scene between Henry de Marsay and Paquita, and he was anxious to know whether the cries of the victim in a drawing-room thus fitted could reach the ears of the other inhabitants of the house.

He entertained me in that same room at a splendid dinner, for which he lighted with his own hand all the tapers in the silver-gilt candelabra, the chandelier, and the candelabra on the mantelpiece. The guests were the Marquis de Belloy and Louis Boulanger the painter. Although very sober and abstemious usually, Balzac did not hesitate from time to time to indulge in a little good cheer. He ate with jovial gormandism which gave one an appetite, and he drank like Pantagruel. Four bottles of the white wine of Vouvray, one of the headiest known, had absolutely no effect upon his strong head, and merely gave more sparkle to his wit. What rare stories he told us! Rabelais, Beroalde de Verville, Eutrapel, Poggio, Straparola, the Queen of Navarre, and all the doctors of the gay science would have acknowledged in him a disciple and a master.

IV

One of Balzac's dreams was of a heroic, devoted friendship, — two souls, two courages, two minds united in the same will. Pierre and Jaffier in Otway's "Venice Preserved" struck him very much, and he refers to them repeatedly. The "Histoire des Treize" is merely the development of this idea, — a powerful unit composed of multiple beings all working blindly for an end agreed upon by all. Every one knows what striking, mysterious, terrible effects he drew from it in "Ferragus," "La Duchesse de Langeais," "La Fille aux yeux d'or;" but real life and mental life were never wholly separated by Balzac as they are by other authors, and his creations followed him beyond his study. He wished to form an association after the fashion of that which united Ferragus, Montriveau, Ronquerolles, and other comrades; only, he did not propose to emulate their bold enterprises. A certain number of friends were to help each other on every occasion and to strive to the best of their ability to help on the success of the one selected, with, of course, the understanding that the latter should in his turn work for the others. Deeply infatuated with his project,

Balzac recruited a few friends whom he brought together only after taking as many precautions as if he were organising a political society or a Carbonari *vente*. The quite needless mystery greatly tickled him, and he set about carrying out his idea in the most serious fashion possible. When he had selected his adepts, he called them together and informed them of the purpose of the society. It is unnecessary to say that every one at once fell in with his views and that the statutes were adopted with enthusiastic unanimity. No one possessed to such a degree as Balzac the power of dazzling, exciting, and intoxicating the coolest heads, the most solid intellects. He had an overflowing, tumultuous, compelling eloquence which carried you off, strive as you might to resist. It was impossible to make any objections; he immediately overwhelmed you with such a deluge of words that you had perforce to keep silence. Besides, he had a reply always ready, and cast on you such lightning-like glances, so brilliant, so full of magnetism, that he filled you with his own desire. The association, which numbered among its members G. de C., Léon Gozlan, Louis Desnoyers, Jules Sandeau, Merle, who was called Handsome Merle, myself, and a few others whom it is unnecessary to name, was called

"The Red Horse." Why "The Red Horse," you may say, rather than the Golden Lion or the Cross of Malta? Because the first meeting of the initiated took place at a restaurant on the Quai de l'Entrepôt, at the end of the Tournelle Bridge. The sign, a red horse, suggested to Balzac the quaint, unintelligible, cabalistic name of his society. When any project had to be framed, when any steps had to be agreed upon, Balzac, who had been unanimously elected Grand Master of the order, sent by one of the initiated to each *horse* (that was the slang name borne by the members among themselves), a letter on which was drawn a little red steed, with these words, "Stable, on such a day and at such a place." The place was occasionally changed, lest curiosity or suspicion should be aroused. In society, although we all were acquainted with each other and had long been so for the most part, we were bound to avoid speaking to each other, or at least, to speak very coldly, so as to remove any thought of connivance. Often in a drawing-room, Balzac would pretend that he was meeting me for the first time, and with winks and grimaces like those of actors in their asides, he would draw my attention to his cleverness and seem to say to me, "See how cleverly I am playing the game!"

What did "The Red Horse" propose to do? To change the government, to institute a new religion, to found a school of philosophy, to master men, or seduce women? Much less than that. We were to get hold of the papers, to manage the theatres, to get elected to the Academy, to be made companions or knights of ever so many orders, and to end our days modestly as peers of France, ministers, and millionaires. It was very easy to do, according to Balzac; all that was needed was to work in harmony, and our modest ambition proved the moderation of our character. That devil of a man had such a powerful sense of vision that he described to each of us, down to the smallest details, the splendid and glorious life which our association would secure for us. As we listened to him, we already saw ourselves leaning, in some fine mansion, on white marble mantelpieces, red ribbons around our necks, stars of brilliants on our breasts, receiving affably political, artistic, and literary celebrities, all of them amazed at our mysterious and rapid fortune. The future did not exist for Balzac; with him everything was in the present. When he evoked the future, he drew it out of its haze and made it tangible. His ideas were so vivid that they became real to him. If he

spoke of a dinner, he ate it while he described it; of a carriage, he felt its soft cushions and its springs; perfect comfort, deep satisfaction were then depicted on his features, although possibly he was actually hungry and walking over a sharp pavement with worn-out shoes.

The whole company was to push, praise, laud, in articles, in notices, in conversation, any member who had just published a book or had a play performed. Whoever had shown hostility to one of the "horses" was to draw down on himself the kicks of the whole stable. "The Red Horse" was unforgiving. The culprit became a mark for hostile criticisms, wearisome iterations, pin-pricks, sarcasms, and other means of driving a man to despair well known to the smaller fry of the press.

I smile as, after so many years, I betray the innocent secret of that literary free-masonry which had no other result than a few notices of a book the success of which did not call for such help; but at the time I took the matter seriously; I imagined we were the Thirteen themselves in very deed, and I was surprised to find that obstacles still existed, — but this world is so badly made. I used to put on an important, mys-

terious air as I elbowed other men, poor dullards who had no suspicion of my power. After four or five meetings "The Red Horse" ceased to live, most of the "horses" not having the wherewithal to pay for their oats at the symbolical manger, and the association which was to appropriate everything was dissolved because the members often lacked five francs, the price of the meal. So each one of us plunged back by himself into the battle of life, and fought his own fight; and that is why Balzac never belonged to the Academy, and died a knight of the Legion of Honour only.

Yet the idea was a sound one, for Balzac, as he himself says of Nucingen, could not possibly have a poor idea. Others who have succeeded turned it to account without shrouding it in the same romanesque fancifulness.

Thrown by one chimera, Balzac immediately climbed on another and set off for another trip into Fairyland, with that childish artlessness which was so naturally united in him to the deepest sagacity and the craftiest mind.

How many a strange project did he unfold to me, how many a quaint paradox did he maintain, and always with the same good faith. Sometimes he

maintained that one ought to live at a cost of not more than nine sous a day; at others, he insisted that a hundred thousand francs was the least with which one could be comfortable. Once, having been asked by me to figure up the items, he replied to my objection that there were still thirty thousand francs unspent, with: "Well, that will do for the butter and radishes. What kind of a house is that which does not spend thirty thousand francs in radishes and butter?" I wish I could paint the glance of sovereign contempt which he let fall on me as he uttered that triumphant reply. His glance meant: "Decidedly, Théo is but a poor fool, a skinned rat, a mean mind. He cannot understand life on a great scale, and has never eaten anything but Breton salt butter."

The public became much interested in the Jardies when Balzac purchased the place with the honourable intention of securing a property for his mother. Every one who travelled by the railway which passes by Ville-d'Avray looked curiously at the little house, half cottage, half chalet, which rose upon the clay slope.

The ground, according to Balzac, was the best possible. Formerly, he maintained, a certain famous wine

was grown there, and the grapes, thanks to an unparalleled exposure, cooked themselves ripe, like the Tokay grapes on the Bohemian hills. It is true that the sun had ample opportunity to ripen the grapes on this spot, for there was but a single tree. Balzac endeavoured to enclose his property with walls, which became famous by their perseveringly falling down, or sliding in a heap down the too steep slope; and he dreamed of raising on this land, favoured by heaven, the most fabulous and the most exotic crops. Here naturally comes in the story of the pine-apples; a story which has been so often repeated that I should not tell it again but that I am able to add to it a genuinely characteristic trait. This was the plan: One hundred thousand pine-apple plants were to be set in the garden of the Jardies, transformed into hot-houses, which would require but little heating, thanks to the very sunny exposure. The pine-apples were to be sold at five francs, instead of the usual price of twenty-five francs, — that is, they would bring in five hundred thousand francs. From this sum was to be deducted one hundred thousand francs for the expenses of cultivation, glazing, and heating; there remained, therefore, four hundred thousand francs net profit, which would give the happy

owner a splendid income, — "without writing a word of copy," he would add. That was nothing: Balzac framed a thousand plans of the sort. But the beauty of it was that we hunted together on the Boulevard Montmartre for a shop in which to sell the yet unplanted pine-apples. The shop was to be painted black with gold lines, and to have a sign in huge letters, "Jardies Pine-apples."

As far as Balzac was concerned, the hundred thousand pine-apples were already shooting up their aigrettes of dentellated leaves above their great golden, lozenged cones under vast glass roofs; he could see them; he enjoyed the high temperature of the hot-house, he breathed in its tropical perfume with dilated and delighted nostrils. And when, having returned to his room, he gazed, leaning on the window, at the snow which was silently falling upon the bare slopes, even then he scarcely lost his illusion. Yet he did take my advice not to hire the shop until the following year, so as to avoid useless expense.

I am writing down my remembrances as they come back to me, without trying to connect what must necessarily be unconnected. Besides, as Boileau used to say, transitions are the great difficulty in poetry, —

and in articles, I might add; but modern journalists have neither so much conscience nor especially so much leisure as the Regent of Parnassus.

Madame de Girardin professed for Balzac a lively admiration, for which he was grateful and in return for which he paid her frequent visits, although he was rightly very chary of his time and his working-hours. Never did any woman possess to so great a degree as Delphine — as we allowed ourselves to call her familiarly among ourselves — the gift of stirring up the minds of her guests. In her company one was always in good spirits, and every one left the room delighted with himself. There was no pebble so hard that she could not make a spark flash from it, and with Balzac, as you will easily imagine, it was not necessary to strike the steel long. He sparkled at once and took fire. Balzac was not exactly what is called a conversationalist, quick in repartee, throwing a clever, decisive remark into a discussion, changing the subject as the talk goes, touching lightly on everything and never going beyond a half-smile. He had an irresistible rush, eloquence, and fire of conversation, and as everybody kept silence to listen to him — in his case, to the general satisfaction — the conversation rapidly

turned into a monologue. His starting-point was soon forgotten and he passed from anecdotes to philosophical reflections, from observations of manners to descriptions of places. As he spoke, his face flushed, his eyes became peculiarly brilliant, his voice assumed different inflections, and sometimes he would burst out laughing, amused by the buffoon apparitions which he saw before he described them. In this way he used to announce, by a sort of trumpet-blare, the arrival of his caricatures and his jokes, and the listeners soon shared his hilarity. Although we were then in the days of dreamers, long-haired like weeping willows, of weepers in skiffs, and of Byronian, disillusioned youth, Balzac possessed that robust and powerful gaiety which Rabelais is supposed to have shared, and which Molière exhibited in his plays only. The broad laugh upon his sensual lips was that of a kindly god whom the sight of the human marionettes amuses, and who does not worry over anything because he understands everything and sees both sides at once. Neither the troubles attendant on his position, so often precarious, nor money worries, nor the fatigue of excessive work, nor his claustration for study, nor his renunciation of all the pleasures of life, nor even

sickness itself could strike down the Herculean joviality which was, in my opinion, one of the most striking characteristics of Balzac. He laughed as he smashed hydras, he was happy as he tore lions asunder, and carried as if it were a hare the boar of Erymanthus on his mighty, muscular shoulders. At the least provocation his gaiety broke out and made his great breast heave. Sometimes, indeed, it would shock a refined person, but however much one might endeavour to remain serious, it had perforce to be shared. And yet you are not to suppose that Balzac sought to amuse the gallery; he merely yielded to a sort of internal intoxication, and painted with rapid strokes, with intense comicality and incomparable talent for buffoonery, the strange phantasmagoria which whirled around in the *camera obscura* of his brain. I cannot better compare the impressions produced by innumerable conversations of his than to those one experiences on looking over the strange drawings of the "Songes drôlatiques" by Master Alcofribas Nasier, which represent monstrous creatures made up of the most dissimilar elements. Some have by way of a head a pair of bellows, the air-hole of which represents the eye; others have the stem of an alembic for a nose;

others again walk upon castors instead of feet; others are round like the paunch of a stewpan and have a cover for a head; but intense life fills these imaginary beings, and in their grimacing faces one recognises the vices, follies, and passions of men. Some, although absurd, almost stop you dead, as would portraits; you could put a name to them.

When you listened to Balzac, a whole carnival of extravagant and real *fantocci* pranced before your eyes, wearing on their shoulders a variegated sentence, waving long sleeves of epithets, noisily blowing their noses with an adverb, slapping around with a bat of antitheses, pulling you by the skirt of your coat and telling your secrets in your ear in a nasal, disguised voice, pirouetting and whirling in the midst of a sparkle of lights and spangles. It was bewildering, and very soon you felt, like Wagner after the speech of Mephistopheles, a mill-stone whirling in your brain.

He was not always in such very high spirits, and then one of his favourite amusements was to imitate the German jargon of Nucingen or Schmuke, or else to talk *rama* like the clients of the boarding-house of Madame Vauquer (*née* Conflans). At the time when

he wrote "Un Début dans la vie," on a sketch by Madame de Surville, he was hunting for transposed proverbs, to be spoken by Mistigris, the painter's apprentice, to whom later, thinking him witty, he assigned a fine position in the "Comédie humaine," under the name of the landscape painter Léon de Lora. Here are some of the proverbs: "Profit is not without honour," "A bird in the hand gathers no moss," "Accessions will happen in the best regulated families," "One touch of nature makes the whole world blush," "Flirtation is the thief of time," "Poets are born not maids," etc. To come upon a good one put him in the best of tempers, and he would skip with the grace of an elephant about the furniture all round the drawing room. On her part, Madame de Girardin was hunting for witticisms for the famous "Lady with the Seven little Chairs" of the *Courrier de Paris*. My help was sometimes required in this matter, and if a stranger had entered and had seen the beautiful Delphine drawing her white fingers through her golden curls with an air of deep reverie; Balzac sunk in a great upholstered armchair in which M. de Girardin usually slept, his closed fists rammed into his trousers pockets, his waistcoat rolled up above

his stomach, swinging one leg monotonously and rhythmically, and testifying by the contracted muscles of his face to extraordinary mental effort; me crouched between two cushions on the divan like an opium eater in an ecstasy, — the stranger could certainly never have suspected what we were meditating upon so deeply. He would have taken it for granted that Balzac was thinking of a new Mme. Firmiani, Madame de Girardin of a new part for Mademoiselle Rachel, and I of some sonnet. And he would have been very far astray. As for puns, Balzac, though his great ambition was to make them, had, after conscientious efforts, to acknowledge his notorious incapacity in this respect, and to keep to the travestied proverbs which preceded the approximate puns which the common-sense school made fashionable. What delightful evenings that will never return! We were far then from foreseeing that the tall, splendid woman, formed like an antique statue, that the robust, quick man who united in himself the vigour of the boar and the bull, half Hercules, half satyr, built to outlast a century, would so soon go to sleep the last sleep, the one at Montmartre, the other at Père-Lachaise, and that of the three I should remain alone to preserve

those remembrances already distant and so near being forgotten.

Like his father, who died by accident when he was more than eighty years old, Balzac believed himself destined to live long. He often talked over his projects for the future with me. He was going to finish the "Comédie humaine," to write the "Theory of the Gait," a "Monograph on Virtue," some fifty dramas, gain more wealth, marry and have two children, — "but not more; two children look well," he would say, "on the back seat of a carriage." All this would necessarily take up time, and I pointed out that when he had finished these jobs he would be about eighty. "Eighty!" he cried, "that is the very flower of age."

One day when we were dining together at M. Émile de Girardin's, he told us an anecdote about his father, by way of showing how vigorous was the stock from which he sprang. M. de Balzac senior, who had been put into an attorney's office, took his meals, according to the custom of the day, at the master's table with the other clerks. Partridges were served. The attorney's wife, who was watching the new-comer out of the corner of her eye, said to him, "M. Balzac, can you

carve?" "Yes, Madam," replied the young fellow, blushing up to his ears, and he bravely seized the carving knife and fork. Being totally ignorant of culinary anatomy, he divided the partridge into four portions, but so vigorously that he split the dish, cut the cloth, and drove the edge of the knife into the table. It was not clever, but it exhibited his strength. The attorney's wife smiled, and from that day out Balzac, the young clerk, was treated very sweetly in that house.

The story, as I tell it, seems cold, but it should be told with Balzac's pantomime as he imitated upon his own plate the paternal exploit, with the air of terror and resolve which he assumed, the fashion with which he seized his knife after having turned up his sleeves, and with which he drove his fork into an imaginary partridge, — Neptune driving away marine monsters never handled his trident with a more vigorous fist. And how terribly he bore down upon it! His cheeks grew purple, his eyes jutted from his head. And when the operation was over, what a glance of righteous satisfaction trying to conceal itself under modesty, he would cast upon the guests!

The truth is, Balzac had in him the making of a great actor. He had a full, sonorous voice, of rich

and powerful timbre, which he could moderate and make very soft at need, and he read admirably well, — a talent which most actors lack. Whatever he told, he acted it with intonations, grimaces, and gestures which in my opinion no comedian ever surpassed.

I find in "Marguerite" by Madame de Girardin, this souvenir of Balzac. It is one of the characters in the book who speaks: —

"He said that Balzac had dined with him the night before, and had been more brilliant and more sparkling than ever. He delighted us with the story of his trip to Austria. What fire! what dash! what power of imitation! He was marvellous. His fashion of paying the postilions is an invention which a novelist of genius alone could come upon. 'I was greatly bothered at every relay,' he said. 'How could I pay? I did not know a word of German, I did not know the currency of the country, — it was very difficult. This is what I imagined. I had a bag filled with small silver coins, kreutzers, etc. On reaching a relay the postilion came to the carriage window. I looked him straight in the eye and I put into his hand one kreutzer, two kreutzers, then three, then four, and so on until I caught him smiling. The moment he smiled, I knew that I had given him one kreutzer too much, so I promptly took back one, and my man was paid.'"

At the Jardies he read to me "Mercadet," the original "Mercadet," far fuller, more complex and

varied than the play when skilfully and tactfully arranged for the Gymnase by d'Ennery. Balzac, who, like Tieck, read on without indicating acts, scenes, or names, made use of a different and perfectly recognisable voice for each personage. The organs with which he endowed the different sorts of creditors were of the most startling comicality. Some were hoarse, some were honeyed, some spoke fast, some slowly, some threateningly, some plaintively. The crowd of them yelped, miauled, growled, grumbled, howled in every possible and impossible tone. First, Debt sang a solo, which soon an innumerable chorus took up. Creditors came out from everywhere: from behind the stove, from below the bed, from the drawers of the bureau; they poured from the chimney, they filtered in through the keyhole; others climbed in by the window like lovers; some sprang from the bottom of a trunk like Jacks-in-the-box, others came through the walls as out of an English trap; and they became a crowd, a roaring multitude, an invasion, a regular flood-tide. In vain Mercadet shook them off; others took their places, and as far as one could see there was to be made out a dark host of creditors on the march, arriving like huge termites to devour their prey. I do

not know if the play was better in that form, but never did any performance produce such an effect upon me.

Balzac, while he was reading "Mercadet," was half lying on the long divan in the Jardies drawing-room, for he had sprained his ankle, having slipped, like his walls, upon the clay soil of his property. A little hair, coming through the stuff, stuck him in the leg and annoyed him. "The chintz is too thin," he said, "the hay comes through. You will have to put thicker stuff underneath," he added as he pulled at the annoying hair.

François, the Caleb of our Ravenswood, would not suffer the splendours of the manor to be laughed at. He corrected his master and said "hair." "Then that scoundrel of an upholsterer has swindled me," replied Balzac. "They are all alike, — I had ordered the thing stuffed with hay. Damn the man!"

The splendours of the Jardies were mostly imaginary. All Balzac's friends can remember having seen written in charcoal upon the walls, bare or covered with gray paper, "Rosewood wainscoting, — tapestry from the Gobelins, — Venetian mirror, — painting by Raphael." Gérard de Nerval had already decorated an apartment in this fashion, and so we were not sur-

prised at it. As for Balzac, he literally believed himself to be dwelling amid gold, marble, and silks. But if he never finished the Jardies, and if his chimeras made people laugh, at least he built himself an eternal dwelling, a monument more durable than brass, a vast city peopled with his creations and gilded by the beams of his glory.

V

By a peculiarity of temperament which he shared in common with several of the most poetic writers of our age, such as Chateaubriand, Madame de Staël, George Sand, Mérimée, Janin, Balzac possessed neither the gift nor the love of verse, however great the efforts he made to attain to it. On this point his excellent judgment, so deep and so sagacious, was at fault; he admired somewhat at haphazard, and, so to speak, as public notoriety led him to do. I do not think, although he professed great respect for Victor Hugo, that he ever felt very much the lyrical qualities of the poet, whose prose, at once sculptural and coloured, amazed him. He, so laborious, nevertheless, and who turned a phrase over as many times as rimesters may put back an Alexandrine on the anvil, thought that to labour at metre was puerile, fastidious, and useless. He

would have willingly recompensed with a bushel of peas those who succeeded in making an idea pass through the narrow ring of rhythm, as Alexander rewarded the Greek who was skilled in throwing from a distance bullets through a ring. Verse, with its fixed, clean form, its elliptical speech unfitted for multiple detail, seemed to him an obstacle invented purposely, a superfluous difficulty, a mnemonic method adapted to the use of primitive days. In this respect he believed very much as did Stendhal: "Can the fact that a work was written while the author was hopping on one foot, add to the pleasure the work gives?"

The Romanticist school contained within itself a few adepts, partisans of absolute truth, who rejected verse as unnatural. If Talma said, "I do not want fine verses," Beyle said, "I do not want verse at all." That was at bottom Balzac's feeling, although in order to appear broad-minded, comprehensive, and universal, he sometimes pretended in society to admire poetry, just as ordinary people affect to care enthusiastically for music which bores them enormously. He was always surprised at seeing me write verse, and delight in doing it. "That is not copy," he would say, and any esteem which he felt for me I owed to my prose.

All the writers, then young, who formed part of the literary movement represented by Hugo, used, like the master, the lyre or the pen. Alfred de Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Musset, spoke indifferently the tongue of gods and the tongue of men; I also — if I may name myself after such glorious names, — possessed that double faculty from the start. It is always easy for poets to descend to prose; the bird may walk when it chooses, but the lion cannot fly. Born prose writers never rise to poetry, however poetical they may be otherwise; the gift of rhythmic speech is a peculiar one, and a man may possess it without being necessarily a great genius, while it is often refused to superior minds. Among the proudest of those who apparently disdain it, more than one is unconsciously annoyed at not possessing it.

Among the two or three thousand personages of the "Comédie humaine" there are two poets, Canalis in "Modeste Mignon," and Lucien de Rubempré in "Splendeurs et Misères des courtisanes." Balzac has represented both in no very favourable way. Canalis is cold, sterile, small, narrow-minded; he is a clever arranger of words, a maker of imitation jewels, who sets paste in silver-gilt and makes necklaces of imita-

tion pearls. His volumes, with numerous leads, broad margins, and wide intervals, contain nothing but melodious nothingness, monotonous music fit only to make schoolgirls sleep or dream. Balzac, who usually espouses warmly the interests of his characters, seems to take a secret pleasure in turning Canalis into ridicule and placing him in embarrassing positions. He riddles his vanity with infinite irony and sarcasm, and winds up by taking from him Modeste Mignon and her great wealth, to give her to Ernest de la Brière. This ending, which is contrary to the commencement of the story, sparkles with veiled malice and sly mockery. Balzac seems to be personally delighted with the clever trick which he has played on Canalis. He thus takes his revenge for the angels, the sylphs, the lakes, the swans, the willows, the skiffs, the stars, and the lyres which the poet has made such abundant use of.

If in Canalis we have the sham poet who saves up his slight inspiration and dams it up in order that it may flow, foam, and sound for a few moments so as to simulate a cascade ; the clever man who makes all his literary successes, laboriously prepared, serve his political ambition ; the positive man, who is fond of money, degrees, pensions, and honours, in spite of his elegiac

attitudes and his posing as an angel who regrets heaven; on the other hand Lucien de Rubempré exhibits to us the idle, frivolous, careless, fantastic, womanishly nervous poet, who is incapable of persistent effort, who has no moral strength, who lives maintained by actresses and courtesans, a marionette the strings of which are pulled at pleasure by the terrible Vautrin, who hides himself under the pseudonym of Carlos Herrera. It is true that in spite of his vices Lucien is seductive; Balzac has bestowed wit, beauty, youth, and elegance upon him. Women adore him, but he ends by hanging himself in prison. Balzac did all he could to bring to a successful issue the marriage of Clotilde de Grandlieu with the author of the "Marguerites," but unfortunately the exigencies of morality were in the way; and what would the Faubourg Saint-Germain have said of the "Comédie humaine" if the pupil of Jacques Collin the convict had married a duke's daughter. Since we are speaking of the author of the "Marguerites," let me note here a bit of information which may interest bibliophiles. The few sonnets which Lucien de Rubempré shows as a sample of his volume of verse to the publisher Dauriat are not by Balzac, for he wrote no verse and asked his friends

for any which he happened to need. The sonnet on the Marguerite is by Madame de Girardin, the sonnet on the Camellia by Lassailly, and that on the Tulip by myself. "Modeste Mignon" also contains some verses, but I do not know who wrote them.

As I said when speaking of "Mercadet," Balzac read admirably, and he was good enough one day to read to me some of my own verses. He recited among others "La Fontaine du Cimetière." Like all prose writers, he read for the sake of the sense only, and tried to conceal the rhythm which poets, when they recite their verses aloud, accentuate, on the contrary, in a fashion unbearable to every one else, but which delights them. We had on this point a long discussion, which merely ended, as is always the case, in each of us being more set in his own private opinion.

The great literary man of the "Comédie humaine" is Daniel d'Arthez, a serious writer, hard-working, long buried, before he makes his reputation, in deep studies of philosophy, history, and linguistics. Balzac dreaded facility, and he did not believe that a work rapidly written could be good. For this reason he entertained singular repugnance towards newspaper writing, and he considered time and talent given up to it

as wasted; nor did he fancy newspaper writers much more, and although himself so great a critic, he despised criticism. The very unflattering portraits which he has drawn of Étienne Lousteau, Nathan, Vernisset, Androche Finot, fairly represent his real opinion of the press. Émile Blondet, introduced into that bad company to represent the good writer, is recompensed for his articles for the imaginary "Débats" of the "Comédie humaine" by a rich marriage with a general's widow, and is thus enabled to give up newspaper work.

Balzac, besides, never bestowed a thought on the newspaper when working. He took his novels to magazines and to daily papers just as they were written, without preparing any breaks or skilfully suspended sentences at the end of each instalment so that readers should desire to know the continuation. He cut up his material into slices of about the same length, and sometimes a description of an arm-chair, begun in one issue, was not finished until the next day. He rightly refused to divide his work into little tableaux like those of a drama or a vaudeville; he thought merely of the finished book. That fashion of working often prevented the immediate success which newspaperdom

requires of the authors it employs. Eugène Sue and Alexandre Dumas were more frequently victorious than Balzac in those daily battles which then delighted the newspapers. He did not win any of that immense popularity which rewarded the "Mysteries of Paris" and "The Wandering Jew," "The Three Musketeers," and "Monte Cristo." "Les Paysans," a masterpiece, even caused a great number of subscribers to the "Presse," in which the first part appeared, to give up the paper; the publication of the work had to be stopped. Every day came letters asking that the novel be brought to a conclusion, — Balzac was thought wearisome. The great idea of the author of the "Comédie humaine" had not yet been grasped. It was to take modern society, and to write about Paris and our days that book which unfortunately no civilisation of antiquity has left to us. The complete edition of the "Comédie humaine," by collecting the scattered works, brought out the philosophical purpose of the writer; from that moment Balzac grew considerably in public opinion, and at last it ceased to consider him as "the most fertile of our romancers," — a stereotyped phrase which irritated him as much as being called "the author of 'Eugénie Grandet.'"

Many a criticism has been written on Balzac, he has been talked over in many a way, but this point — the absolute modernness of his genius, in my opinion the most characteristic, — has not been dwelt upon. Balzac owes nothing whatever to antiquity; the Greeks and Romans do not exist for him; he does not need, therefore, to call for freedom from them. In the make-up of his talent there is no trace of Homer, of Virgil, of Horace, not even of the "Viris Illustribus," — no one was ever less classical.

Balzac, like Gavarni, saw his contemporaries; but in art the highest difficulty is to paint what one beholds. It is quite possible to go through one's times without beholding them, and that is what many great minds have done. Nothing seems simpler, and yet nothing is harder than to be of one's own time; to wear neither green nor blue glasses, to think with one's brain, to make use of the speech of the day and not to reproduce in *centons* the phrases of one's predecessors. Now Balzac possessed that very rare merit. The ages have a perspective of their own and a distance of their own; then the great masses stand out, the lines become clear, the troublesome details vanish; by the help of classical remembrances and of the harmonious

names of antiquity, the meanest of rhetoricians can turn out a tragedy, a poem, a historical study. But to find yourself in the crowd, elbowed by it, and yet to catch its aspect, to follow its currents, to distinguish personalities, to draw the faces of so many different beings, to exhibit the secret motives of their actions, — that requires a very special genius, and the author of the "Comédie humaine" possessed that genius to a degree which no one has equalled before, and probably no one ever will equal.

This deep understanding of modern things made Balzac, I must say, rather insensible to plastic beauty; he read with careless eye the marmorean strophes in which Greek art sang the perfection of the human form, in the Greek Museum he looked at the Venus of Milo without any great pleasure; but the fair Parisian who stopped in front of the immortal statue, wrapped in her long cashmere shawl which fell without a fold from the neck to the bottom of the skirt, wearing a bonnet with a Chantilly veil, gloved with neat Jouvin gloves, showing from under the hem of her flounced dress the varnished tip of her shoe, made his eye sparkle with delight. He analysed her coquettish ways, he enjoyed to the full her skilled graces, think-

ing, as she did, that the goddess was rather thick-waisted and would not show to advantage in the drawing-rooms of Mesdames de Beauséant, de Listomère, or d'Espard. Ideal beauty, with its serene, clean lines, was too simple, cold, and plain for this complex, rich, diversified genius. He says somewhere, "A man must be a Raphael to paint many Virgins." Character pleased him more than style, and he preferred physiognomy to beauty. In his portraits of women he never idealised, but put a sign, a wrinkle, a fold, a spot of rose, a softened, tired corner, a vein too apparent, or some detail which indicated the wear and tear of life, and which a poet, painting the same face, would have unquestionably effaced, though no doubt he would have been wrong to do so.

I have not the least intention of criticising Balzac on this point, for that defect is his chief quality. He accepted no mythologies or traditions, and, happily for us, was unacquainted with that ideal form of the verse of poets, of the marbles of Greece and Rome, and of the paintings of the Renaissance, which interposes between the eye of the artist and reality. He loved the woman of our day such as she is, and not a pale statue. He loved her for her virtues, her vices, her fancies,

and her shawls, her dresses and bonnets, and followed her through life far beyond that point on the road where love abandons her; he prolonged her youth by several years; he gave her new springtimes and Indian summers; he gilded her sunsets with most splendid beams. We are so classical in France that even after two thousand years people have not perceived that roses in our climate do not bloom in April, as in the descriptions of the poets of antiquity, but in June, and that our women begin to be beautiful at the age when those of Greece, more precocious, ceased to be so. How many a charming type he has imagined or reproduced; Madame Firmiani, the Duchess de Maufrigneuse, the Princess de Cadignan, Madame de Mortsauf, Lady Dudley, the Duchess de Langeais, Madame Jules, Modeste Mignon, Diane de Chaulieu, to say nothing of the middle-class women, the *grisettes* and the ladies of his *demi-monde*.

And how well he loved our modern Paris, the beauty of which the amateurs of local colour and picturesqueness in his day appreciated so little! He traversed it in every direction by night and by day; there was not a blind lane, not a smelly passageway, not a narrow, muddy, black street which did not become

under his pen an etching worthy of Rembrandt, full of shadows, swarming with mystery in which shows faintly the trembling dot of light. Wealth and wretchedness, pleasure and suffering, shame and glory, beauty and ugliness, — he knew every bit of his beloved town. Paris was to him an enormous, hybrid, formidable monster, a polypus with a hundred thousand tentacles, which he listened to and watched live, and which formed in his eyes one vast individuality. On this point the reader should peruse the marvellous pages at the beginning of "La Fille aux yeux d'or," in which Balzac, trespassing upon the musician's art, has sought, as if he were writing a symphony for a great orchestra, to bring out the sound of all the voices, all the sobs, all the cries, all the rumours, all the groans of Paris at work.

It was from this modernism, on which I dwell purposely, that arose, without his suspecting it, the difficulty of labour which Balzac felt in the accomplishment of his work. The French language, as wrought out by the Classics of the seventeenth century, is fitted, if it is desired to conform to it, to express general ideas only, and to paint conventional figures amid vague surroundings. To express the innumerable details of charac-

ters, forms, architecture, styles of furniture, Balzac was obliged to make for himself a special tongue composed of technical terms, of the slang of science, of the studio, of the theatre, of the circus itself. Every word which had a meaning was welcomed, and the sentence, in order to receive it, opened an insert, a parenthesis, and complacently lengthened itself out. That is what made superficial critics say that Balzac was no writer. He possessed, although he did not think so, a style, and a very beautiful style, the necessary, inevitable, mathematical style of his ideas.

VI

No one can pretend to write a complete biography of Balzac. Any close intimacy with him was necessarily broken into by lapses, absences, and disappearances. Work absolutely ordered Balzac's life, and if — as he says himself with an accent of touching feeling, in a letter to his sister — he unhesitatingly sacrificed to that jealous god the joys and distractions of life, it cost him somewhat to give up every intercourse which had brought some friendship. To reply in a few words to a long letter became for him, in the course of his overwhelming labours, a piece of prodigality

which he could rarely indulge in. He was the slave of his work, and a willing slave. He had, with a very kind, tender heart, the egotism of a great worker. And who could have possibly thought of being annoyed at his forced negligence and his apparent forgetfulness, on beholding the results of his flights and his seclusions? When, having thoroughly finished his work, he reappeared, you would have sworn that he had left you but the night before, and he resumed the interrupted conversation just as though six months and sometimes more had not passed by. He made trips through France to study the localities in which he placed his "Scènes de la Vie de Province," and withdrew to the house of a friend in Touraine or Charente, finding there the peace which his creditors did not always allow him to enjoy in Paris. After some great work he occasionally allowed himself a somewhat longer trip into Germany, Upper Italy, or Switzerland, but these rapid excursions, troubled by the recollection of notes falling due and contracts to be kept or of insufficient means, fatigued him perhaps rather more than they rested him. His vast glance took in the heavens, the horizons, mountains, landscapes, monuments, houses, and interiors, and intrusted them to that comprehensive

and mighty memory which never failed him. Greater in this respect than descriptive poets, Balzac saw man at the same time as nature; he studied faces, manners, passions, characters with the same glance that he studied cities, costumes, and furniture. Just as the smallest fragment of bone was sufficient for Cuvier, so a detail sufficed him to imagine and to reconstitute accurately an individual whom he had caught sight of as he passed. Balzac's talent for observation has been often and rightly praised, but great as it was, it is not to be supposed that the author of the "Comédie humaine" always drew his portraits, so strictly true, from nature. His method in no wise resembled that of Henri Monnier, who followed in real life some individual in order to sketch him with pen and pencil, taking down his least gestures, noting his most insignificant remarks so as to obtain at one and the same time a photograph and a page of shorthand notes. Balzac, absorbed most of the time in his work, could not materially observe the two thousand characters which play their part in his comedy in one hundred acts; but every man, when he possesses the inner sight, contains humanity, and becomes a microcosm in which nothing is lacking. He has — not always, but often — ob-

served within himself the numerous types which live in his work. That is why they are complex, — no one can absolutely live another man's life; in such a case there are motives which remain obscure, unknown details, actions of which one loses track. Even in the most faithful portraits there must be some creation. So Balzac created much more than he saw, yet his remarkable faculties as an anatomist and a physiologist have merely served the poet in him, just as the assistant serves the professor to whom he hands the materials needed for a demonstration.

Perhaps this is the place to define truth as understood by Balzac. In these days of realism, it is well to be explicit on this point. Truth in art is not truth in nature; everything represented by means of art necessarily contains some small amount of conventionality. You may reduce it as much as you like, it still exists, even if it be merely perspective in painting, and language in literature. Balzac brings out, enlarges, heightens, cuts away, adds, shades, lights up, throws into the distance or draws near men and things according to the effect he seeks to produce; he is truthful no doubt, but with the additions and the sacrifices called for by art. He prepares rich, dark back-

grounds for his luminous figures; he sets his sombre figures against light backgrounds. Like Rembrandt he skilfully places as required the high light on the brow or the nose of the character. Sometimes he obtains fantastic and eccentric results in his descriptions by placing, without saying a word, a microscope under the reader's eyes; then the details appear with unnatural sharpness, with exaggerated minuteness, with incomprehensible and formidable enlargements; the tissues, the bracts, the pores, the villi, the grain, the fibres, the capillary ducts, assume an enormous importance, and turn a face insignificant to the naked eye into a sort of chimerical mask as amazing as those sculptured under the cornices of the Pont Neuf and vermiculated by time. Characters also are carried to extremes, as is proper in types. If Baron Hulot is a libertine, he is also the incarnation of lust; he is both a man and a vice, both a personality and an abstraction. He unites in himself all the scattered features of such a character. A writer of less genius would have drawn a portrait; Balzac has created a type. Men do not have as many muscles as Michael Angelo gives them in order to suggest the idea of strength. Balzac too is full of this useful exaggera-

tion, of those heavy strokes which bring out and support the outline. He imagines, as he copies, like a master, and he impresses his own touch on everything.

As this is not a literary criticism but a biographical study I am writing, I shall not carry these remarks farther. It is sufficient to make the suggestion. Balzac, whom the Realistic school seems to desire to claim as its leader, has no connection with its tendencies.

Unlike certain great literary men who feed on their own genius alone, Balzac wrote a great deal and with prodigious rapidity. He was fond of books and had brought together a fine library, which he intended to leave to his native city, a purpose which the indifference of his townsmen towards him caused him to abandon later. He absorbed in a few days the voluminous works of Swedenborg, which his mother owned, — she was at that time rather preoccupied with mysticism. That piece of reading gave us "Séraphita-Séraphitus," one of the most amazing products of modern literature. Never did Balzac approach nearer ideal beauty than he did in that book. The climb up the mountain is so ethereal, supernatural, and luminous that it fairly lifts you away from earth. There are two

colours only employed, — azure blue and snow white, with a few pearly tones for shadows. I know nothing more exquisite than the opening. The description of Norway with its fiords seen from above is dazzling and turns one's head.

"Louis Lambert" also shows traces of the reading of Swedenborg; but soon Balzac, who had borrowed the eagle pinions of the mystics to soar in the infinite, returned to the earth we inhabit, although his robust lungs could have breathed for any length of time that subtile air deadly to the weak; he abandoned the world beyond after that flight and returned to real life. Perhaps his splendid genius would have vanished too soon, had he continued to rise within the boundless heights of mysticism, and we ought to count ourselves happy that he was satisfied with "Louis Lambert" and "Séraphita-Séraphitus," which sufficiently represent in the "Comédie humaine" the supernatural side, and which open a wide enough door into the invisible world.

Let me now pass to more intimate details. The great Goethe had a horror of three things, — one of them was tobacco smoke. Like the Jupiter of the German poetic Olympus, Balzac could not bear tobacco under any form whatever; he anathematised pipes and pro-

scribed cigars; he did not tolerate even the smallest Spanish cigarette. The Asiatic *hookah* alone found favour in his eyes, and even that he tolerated merely as a curious trifle and on account of its local colour. In his philippics against Nicot's weed he did not imitate the doctor who, during a dissertation upon the evils of snuff, never ceased to take great pinches from a big snuffbox placed near him. Balzac never smoked; his "Theory of Stimulants" contains a regular indictment against tobacco, and I have no doubt that, had he been a sultan like Amurat, he would have caused all obstinate smokers and those who had relapsed to be beheaded. His great predilection was for coffee, which did him so much harm, and perchance killed him, although he was built to live a hundred years.

Was Balzac right or wrong? Is tobacco, as he maintained, a deadly poison, and does it intoxicate those whom it does not turn into brutes? Is it the Western opium which dulls will and mind? That is a question I cannot solve, but I shall name here a few famous persons of our day, some of whom smoked and others who did not. Goethe and Heine, singularly enough, Germans though they were, did not smoke. Byron

smoked; but Hugo does not, any more than Alexandre Dumas senior; on the other hand, Alfred de Musset, Eugène Sue, George Sand, Mérimée, Paul de Saint-Victor, Émile Augier, Ponsard smoked and smoke still, and yet they are not quite fools.

This aversion, besides, was shared by nearly all the men born with our century or somewhat earlier. At that time only sailors or soldiers smoked; women fainted at the smell of a pipe or a cigar. They have progressed since then, and more than one pair of rosy lips lovingly presses the gold mouthpiece of a *puro* in a boudoir changed into a smoking-room. Dowagers and turbaned mothers have alone preserved their old antipathy, and stoically behold their drawing-rooms deserted by refractory youth.

Every time that Balzac is obliged for the verisimilitude of his story to allow one of his characters to indulge in this horrible habit, his concise, disdainful sentence exhibits secret blame. "As for du Marsay," he says, "he was busy smoking cigars, —" and he must have been very fond of that *condottiere* of dandyism, to allow him to smoke in his work.

A delicate-mannered woman, no doubt, inspired Balzac with that aversion; that is a point I cannot

clear up. What is certain is that the Revenue never made a penny by him.

Talking of women, Balzac, who described them so well, must certainly have known them. In one of the letters he wrote to his sister, Madame de Surville, when he was still young and quite unknown, he states the ideal hope of his life in two words, — to be famous and beloved. The first part of the programme — which every artist has marked out for himself — was most fully realised. Was the second fulfilled also? The opinion of the most intimate friends of Balzac is that his loves were at the most platonic, but Madame de Surville smiles at the suggestion, with a smile full of feminine finesse and of modest reticence. She maintains that her brother was uncommonly discreet, and that if he had chosen to speak, he could have told many things. No doubt that is true, and Balzac's strong-box must have contained more notes written in delicate, sloping handwriting, than the lacquered coffers of Canalis. One scents woman in his work, *odor di femina*. When one penetrates into it, one hears, behind the doors which close on the steps of the secret staircase, the rustle of silk and the creaking of shoes. The semicircular, padded drawing-room of the rue des

Batailles, of which I have quoted the description inserted by the author in the "Fille aux yeux d'or," did not remain absolutely virgin, as many of us supposed it did. In the whole course of my intimacy with him, — which lasted from 1836 to the day of his death, — once alone did Balzac allude, in the most respectful words, to an attachment of his early youth. Even then he told me only the first name of the woman, whose remembrance, after so many years, still brought tears to his eyes. If he had told me any more, I should certainly not violate his confidence. The genius of a great writer belongs to the world, but his heart is his own. I merely touch, by the way, on this tender and delicate side of Balzac's life, because all I have to say about it is to his honour. His reserve and his mystery are characteristic of a well-bred man; if he was beloved, as he wished to be in his youthful dreams, the world, at least, has never known aught of it.

Do not imagine that on this account Balzac was austere and chaste in his speech. The author of the "Contes drôlatiques" was too well acquainted with Rabelais, and too much after the fashion of Pantagruel, to avoid jokes; he knew good stories and he invented

others. His broad jokes, interlarded with gallic crudities, would have made horrified cant cry out "Shocking!" but his laughing, talkative lips were sealed like the tomb when a serious feeling was in question. He scarcely allowed his best friends to guess at his love for a distinguished foreign lady, — a love which may be spoken of since it was crowned by marriage. It was to that passion, which he had felt for a long time, that his distant excursions were due, although until the very last day, the object of them remained a mystery to his friends.

Absorbed in his work, Balzac did not think of trying the drama until very late. Public opinion in general considered him — wrongly, I think — not well fitted for it, on the score of a few more or less risky attempts of his. The man who created so many types, analysed so many characters, gave life to so many people, was bound to succeed on the stage. But as I have said, Balzac was not spontaneous, and the proofs of a drama cannot be corrected. If he had lived, he would unquestionably have found his right line and obtained success after writing a dozen plays. The "Marâtre," played at the Théâtre Historique, was very nearly a masterpiece; "Mercadet," slightly arranged by a

clever adapter, obtained a long posthumous success at the Gymnase.

I am bound to say, however, that what induced him to make the attempt was rather the hope of earning a large sum which would free him at once from his financial embarrassments, than a genuine vocation. Every one knows that a play is much more profitable than a book. A series of performances from which one draws rather large profits soon produces by accumulation considerable sums; if the work of combination is greater, the material labour is less. It takes several dramas to fill a volume, and while you are walking or resting idly with your slippers on, the footlights are lighted, the stage is set, the actors declaim and gesticulate, and you find you have made more money than by scribbling away for a week, painfully bowed over your desk. Some melodramas have brought in more to their authors than "Notre-Dame de Paris" did to Victor Hugo or the "Parents pauvres" to Balzac.

It is curious that Balzac, who thought out his novels elaborately and corrected them with such obstinate minuteness, seemed, when it was a question of writing a play, seized with a fever of rapidity. He not only did not re-write his plays eight or ten times as he did

his novels, he did not really write them at all. Scarcely had he fixed upon his plan than he appointed a day for the reading and called upon his friends to work up the matter. Orliac, Lassailly, Laurent-Jan, myself, and others have often been summoned in the middle of the night or at extraordinarily early hours. In such cases we had to drop everything, for every moment's delay caused the loss of millions.

An urgent note from Balzac summoned me one day to repair at once to the rue de Richelieu, where he had a room in the house of Buisson the tailor. I found Balzac robed in his monkish gown and stamping with impatience on the blue and white carpet of a dainty little attic, the walls of which were hung with Carmelite chintz with blue ornaments, for in spite of his apparent neglectfulness, he had the instinct of interior arrangements and always prepared a comfortable nest for his laborious night-watches; in none of his lodgings did one meet with that picturesque disorder so dear to the artist.

"At last, here is Théo!" he exclaimed as he saw me. "You slow coach, you tardigrade, you sloth! Why do you not hurry up? Why do you not make haste? You ought to have been here an hour ago.

To-morrow I have to read to Horrel a great drama in five acts."

"Oh! and you want my advice?" I replied, as I settled myself in an arm-chair after the fashion of a man who makes ready to submit to a long course of reading.

Balzac divined my thought by my attitude, and he said in the quietest possible way, "The play is not yet written."

"The devil!" said I. "Well, you will have to put off the reading for six weeks."

"No; we shall knock up the dramorama together in order to get the pay. I have a heavy note to meet at such a date."

"It is impossible to do it before to-morrow, — there would not be time to copy it."

"This is how I have arranged matters: you are to write one act, Orliac another, Laurent-Jan the third, de Belloy the fourth, and I the fifth; and I shall read at noon as agreed upon. An act in a drama does not have more than four or five hundred lines; you can write four or five hundred lines of dialogue during a day and a night."

"Tell me the subject, the plan, sketch the char-

acters in a few words, and I will set to work," I replied, pretty well upset.

"Ah!" he cried with an air of superb weariness and magnificent disdain, "if I have to tell you the subject, it will never be done."

I had not thought I was indiscreet in putting such a question, which struck Balzac as perfectly idle.

Managing with much difficulty to get some notion of the plot, I set to work to dash off a scene, a few words alone of which remained in the final work, which was not read the next day, as will readily be believed. I do not know what the other collaborators did, but the only one who seriously set to work was Laurent-Jan, to whom the play is dedicated. That play was "Vautrin." Every one knows that the dynastic and pyramidal tuft of hair which Frédérick Lemaître bethought himself of wearing in his disguise as a Mexican general, drew down upon the play the anger of the authorities. "Vautrin," interdicted, was performed but once, and poor Balzac was like the milk-maid with her jars upset; the prodigious sums which he had figured as the probable profits of his drama melted into ciphers; which did not prevent his refusing in a dignified fashion the compensation offered by the ministry.

At the beginning of this study I have spoken occasionally of the dandiacal fancies exhibited occasionally by Balzac; I spoke of his blue coat with buttons of massive gold, his huge cane ornamented with a mass of turquoises, his appearances in society and in the infernal box. This splendour lasted but for a time, and Balzac recognised that he was not fitted to play the part of Alcibiades or Brummel. He could be met, especially in the morning when he hastened to the printing office to carry copy and to fetch away proofs, in an infinitely less superb dress. Then he wore a green hunting-jacket with brass buttons in the shape of foxes' heads, trousers with straps, checkered gray and black, tucked into big shoes, a red kerchief twisted rope fashion around his neck, a dismal hat brushed the wrong way, with a blue band stained with perspiration, — garments which covered rather than clothed "the most fertile of our novelists." But maugre the disorder and poverty of the costume, no one would have thought of mistaking for a vulgar stranger the stout man with blazing eyes, mobile nostrils, ruddy cheeks, illumined by genius, who passed by carried away by his dream as in a whirlwind. At sight of him sarcasm stopped on the street boy's lips and the serious man

ceased to smile; one guessed that he was a king of thought.

Sometimes, on the contrary, he would be seen walking slowly, his nose in the air, his eyes hunting around, following first one side of the street, then examining the other, gaping, not at the birds, but at the signs. He was looking for names to give to his characters. He rightly claimed that a name can no more be invented than a word. According to him, names came of themselves, like languages; real names, besides, possessed a life, a meaning, a variety, a cabalistic power, and it was impossible to consider the choice of a name too important. Léon Gozlan has told charmingly in his "Balzac en pantoufles," how the famous Z. Marcas of the "Revue parisienne" was discovered. A stove-man's sign furnished the long sought for name of Gubetta to Victor Hugo, who was no less careful than Balzac in the appellations he gave to his characters.

The hard life of night work had, in spite of his strong constitution, left its mark upon Balzac's face, and I find in "Albert Savarus" a portrait of himself drawn by him, which represents him such as he was at that time (1842), with some slight modifications.

"A splendid head, the black hair already streaked with white, hair like that of Saint Peter or Saint Paul in pictures, with thick, shining curls, hair as hard as horsehair; a neck round and white like a woman's; a splendid brow, divided by that deep wrinkle which great projects create, which deep meditations imprint on the brow of great men; an olive complexion flushed with red spots; a square nose, fiery eyes, hollow cheeks, with two long wrinkles indicative of suffering; a mouth with a pleasant smile, and a small chin; two small crow's-feet on the temples; hollow eyes rolling under deep-set eyebrows like two globes of fire; but in spite of these marks of violent passions, a look of calmness and deep resignation; a voice of penetrating sweetness, surprising by its facility, — the real orator's voice, sometimes clean and crafty, sometimes insinuating, and thunderous at need, then turning to sarcasm and becoming incisive. Mr. Albert Savarus is of middle stature, neither stout nor thin. Finally, his hands are like the hands of a prelate."

In this portrait, which is very faithful on the whole, Balzac has somewhat idealised himself for the sake of the novel, and diminished his weight by a few pounds, a license quite permissible to a hero beloved of the Duchess of Argaiolo and Madame Philomène de Watteville. "Albert Savarus," one of the least known and least frequently quoted novels of Balzac, contains many details, somewhat modified, as to his habits of

life and work. One might even see in it, were it permissible to lift such veils, confidences of another kind.

Balzac had left the rue des Batailles for the Jardies; he then went to live at Passy. The house which he inhabited, situated upon a sharp slope, presented a rather curious architectural arrangement: you entered it somewhat as wine enters into a bottle, — you had to go down three stories to reach the ground floor. The entrance door on the street side opened almost in the roof, like an attic. I once dined there with Léon Gozlan. It was a strange dinner prepared in accordance with the economic recipes invented by Balzac. At my express request the famous onion soup, endowed with so many hygienic and symbolical virtues, and which nearly killed Lassailly, did not form part of it, but the wines were wonderful. Every bottle had its history, and Balzac told it with unequalled eloquence, spirit, and conviction. The claret had thrice gone around the world; the Château-Neuf du Pape went back to fabulous days; the rum was drawn from a cask tossed by the ocean for more than a century, and which had been opened with axes, so thick was the crust formed upon it by shells, madrepores, and seaweed. Our palates, surprised, irritated by acid flavours, in vain protested

against these illustrious origins; Balzac was as serious as an augur, and in spite of the proverb we looked at him in vain, we could not make him laugh. At dessert appeared pears so ripe, so large, so mellow, so juicy, that they would have been fit for a king's banquet. Balzac devoured five or six, the juice running down his chin. He believed that this fruit was healthful, and he ate it in such quantities as much for hygienic reasons as because he was fond of it. He already felt the first symptoms of the disease which was to kill him. Death, with its lean fingers, was feeling that robust body to know where to attack it, and finding it weak nowhere, it killed him by plethora and hypertrophy. Balzac's cheeks were always flushed and marked with those red spots which are to careless eyes an indication of health; but to the observer the yellow hepatitic tones surrounded with their golden halo the tired eyelids. The glance, made brighter by that warm, brown tone, appeared but more brilliant and more sparkling, and lulled anxiety.

At this moment Balzac was very full of occult sciences, of chiromancy, of cartomancy. He had been told of a sibyl more amazing even than Mademoiselle Lenormant, and he induced me, as well as

Madame de Girardin and Méry, to go and consult her with him. The pythoness lived at Auteuil, I have forgotten in what street; nor does it matter, for the address given us was the wrong one. We came plump upon a family of worthy townspeople enjoying the country, — the husband, the wife, and an old mother, whose looks Balzac, who was certain she must be the fortune-teller, maintained were absolutely cabalistic. The good lady, not at all flattered at being taken for a witch, got angry; the husband took us for practical jokers or rascals; the younger woman laughed loud and long, and the maid prudently hastened to lock up the silver. We had to withdraw in confusion, but Balzac maintained that that was the house, and having climbed back into the carriage, muttered insults addressed to the old woman: "Stryge, harpy, magician, empresa, larva, lamia, lemur, ghoul, psylla, aspiole," and whatever a thorough knowledge of Rabelais' litanies could suggest in the way of curious expressions. We tried in a few other places, still fruitlessly, and Delphine maintained that Balzac had imagined this "resource of Quinola" in order to be driven to Auteuil, where he had some business, and to have pleasant companions with him.

I fancy, however, that Balzac found for himself that Madame Fontaine whom we were looking for together, for in the "Comédiens sans le savoir" he has described her between her hen Bibouche and her toad Astaroth, with frightful, fantastic truthfulness, if such words can be combined. Did he seriously consult her, or did he go to see her simply as an observer? There are certain passages in the "Comédie humaine" which seem to imply that Balzac did have a sort of faith in occult sciences, concerning which officially recognised sciences have not yet spoken their last word. About this time Balzac began to exhibit a fancy for old furniture, boxes, and china. The smallest bit of worm-eaten furniture which he bought in the rue de Lappe always came from some illustrious place, and he developed detailed genealogies concerning the simplest knick-knacks. He concealed them here and there, always on account of those fantastic creditors, in whose existence I began to disbelieve. I even amused myself by spreading the report that Balzac was a millionaire, and that he was purchasing old stockings from dealers in insects and beetles to hide ounces, quadruples, Genovines, cross-pieces, pillar-pieces and double louis, after the manner of Father

Grandet; I reported everywhere that he had three wells, like Abul Khasim, filled to the mouth with carbuncles, dinars, and omans. "Théo will be the cause of my having my throat cut some morning with his nonsense," said Balzac, annoyed and delighted at one and the same time.

My jokes gained some appearance of likelihood from the new dwelling inhabited by Balzac, in the rue Fortuné, in the Beaujon quarter, less peopled then than now. He had there a small, mysterious house, which had sheltered the loves of a luxurious financier. From the outside one caught a glimpse over the wall of a sort of cupola, formed by the arched ceiling of a boudoir, and of the fresh paint of the closed shutters.

When one entered this nook, which was not easy, for the master of the house concealed himself with excessive care, a thousand details of excessive luxury and comfort were seen which contradicted the poverty that he affected. He received me, however, one day, and I saw a dining-room wainscoted with old oak, with a table, chimneypiece, sideboards, credences, and chairs of carved wood which would have made Berruguete, Cornejo, Duque, and Verbruggen envious;

a drawing-room hung with golden yellow damask, with doors, cornices, plinths, and windows of ebony; a library of books placed in cases inlaid with mother-of-pearl and copper in the style of Boulle; a bathroom in yellow breccia with stucco *bassi-relievi;* a domed boudoir, the old paintings of which had been restored by Edmond Hédouin; a gallery lighted from above, which I recognised later in the collection of "Cousin Pons;" on the shelves all sorts of curiosities, Dresden and Sèvres porcelain, vases of *craquelé* celadon; and on the stairs, which were covered with a carpet, tall Chinese vases and a splendid lantern suspended by a red silk rope.

"You must have emptied one of Abul Khasim's hiding-places," said I laughingly to Balzac, as I beheld these splendours. "You see, I was right when I said that you are a millionaire."

"I am poorer than ever," he replied, assuming a humble and contrite look. "None of that belongs to me. I furnished the house for a friend who is expected, — I am only the watchman and guardian of the house."

I am quoting his words literally. He made the same reply to several persons, who were as much

amazed as I. The riddle was soon solved by the marriage of Balzac to the woman whom he had loved for so long a time.

There is a Turkish proverb which says, "When the house is finished Death enters." That is why sultans always take care to have a palace in course of construction, which they are very careful not to finish. Life appears to want nothing to be complete save misfortune; there is nothing to be so dreaded as a wish which has been fulfilled.

The famous debts were paid at last, the desired marriage was an accomplished fact, the nest made for happiness was lined with down and cotton; and as if they had foreseen his approaching death, those who envied Balzac began to praise him. The "Parents pauvres" and "Cousin Pons," in which the author's genius shone in all its brilliancy, were unanimously admired. This was too much glory; there was nothing left for him but to die. The disease made rapid progress, but no one believed in a fatal ending, so much did we all trust in Balzac's athletic constitution. I believed firmly that he would see us all to the grave.

I was going to take a trip to Italy, and before leaving I wished to say good-bye to our illustrious friend.

He had driven out to pass some exotic curiosity through the customs. I went away reassured, and at the moment when I was getting into the carriage I was handed a note from Madame de Balzac which kindly explained, with polite regret, why I had not found her husband at home. At the foot of the note Balzac had written these words : —

"I can neither read nor write any more.

"De Balzac."

I have preserved as a relic that dread line, probably the last ever written by the author of the "Comédie humaine." It was — but I did not understand it at first — the last cry, the "*Eli, lama sabacthani*" of the thinker and worker. The thought that Balzac could die did not even occur to me.

A few days later I was eating an ice at the Café Florian on the Piazza San Marco; I opened the *Journal des Débats*, one of the few French papers which are allowed in Venice, and I saw in it the announcement of Balzac's death. I nearly fell from my chair on the stone flags of the Piazza, thunderstruck at the news; and my grief was soon mingled with an unchristian impulse of indignation and revolt, for all

souls are of equal value before God. I had just been visiting the lunatic asylum in the island of San Servolo, and I had seen there decrepit idiots, octogenarian wrecks, human larvæ, deprived even of animal instinct; and I asked myself why that mighty brain had gone out like a candle on which one blows, when tenacious life lingered in these shadowed brains, faintly traversed from time to time by deceitful gleams.

Eight years have elapsed since that fatal day, and every day Balzac looms larger. When he mingled with his contemporaries he was imperfectly appreciated, for he was seen only partially and under aspects at times unfavourable; now the edifice which he built rises the higher as one draws away from it, like a cathedral in a city, masked by the neighbouring houses, but which on the horizon looms up vast above the lower roofs and monuments. The monument has not been completed, but such as it is, it is terrifying in its enormity, and generations to come will ask themselves with surprise, Who was the giant that single-handed raised these formidable blocks and built so high that tower of Babel in which a whole world is buzzing?

Dead though he is, Balzac still has defamers. The commonplace reproach of immorality, the last insult

of powerless and jealous mediocrity, or often of mere stupidity, is still cast on his memory. Not only is the author of the "Comédie humaine" not immoral, he is an austere moralist. A Royalist and a Catholic, he stands up for authority, praises religion, preaches duty, blames passions, and believes that happiness is to be obtained only through marriage and within the family circle.

"Man," he says, "is neither good nor wicked; he is born with instincts and appetites; society, far from depraving him, as Rousseau maintained, improves him and makes him better, but interest develops also his evil tendencies. Christianity, and especially Catholicism, being, as I have stated in the 'Médecin de campagne,' a complete system for the repression of the depraved tendencies of man, is the most powerful factor in social order."

And with an ingenuity becoming to a great man, foreseeing the reproach of immorality which wrong-headed people would address to him, he numbers the characters irreproachably virtuous which are to be met in the "Comédie humaine": Pierrette Lorrain, Ursule Mirouët, Constance Birotteau, La Fosseuse, Eugénie Grandet, Marguerite Claës, Pauline de Ville-

noix, Madame Jules, Madame de la Chanterie, Ève Chardon, Mademoiselle d'Esgrignon, Madame Firmiani, Agathe Rouget, Renée de Maucombe; without counting among the men Joseph Le Bas, Genestas, Benassis, the *curé* Bonnet, Dr. Minoret, Pillerault, David Séchard, the two Birotteaus, Chaperon the *curé*, Popinot the judge, Bourgeat, the Sauviats, the Taschérons, etc.

Rascally figures are not lacking, it is true, in the "Comédie humaine," but is Paris peopled exclusively by angels?

HENRY MURGER

BORN IN 1822 — DIED IN 1861

HENRY MURGER thought chiefly about youth, — indeed, he may be said to have thought of youth alone. Life seemed to have stopped with him with his twentieth year; he did not look forward, but backward, and at every step he took he turned his head around. The present had scarcely any existence for him; he lived in the past alone. He sorrowed because he no longer experienced the sweet surprise caused by emotions and feelings which is experienced but once, and he constantly returned to it in thought. He was wholly retrospective, and in order to give colour to his poetry, he had to pass it through the prism of remembrance. Although he was thirty-eight when he died, his talent was always that of a young man of twenty-five. Like certain actors who continue, in spite of their age, to play lovers' rôles, he could play the parts of youth only. On his tree of life the flower never turned

into fruit; it was bound to remain a flower forever, and if it fell from its stem, it was to perfume with its faded imprint the pages of a reliquary. A bunch of faded violets, a bit of faded ribbon, a lock of hair under glass, a stray glove, formed the poet's library. He read in his heart only, and reproduced only the impression he had felt, and that a long time afterwards, when it was idealised through regret and melancholy. The pearls in his jewel case are the tears of bygone days which he preserved. Most careful is he of those dear treasures. With a trembling hand, in spite of his sarcastic look, he removes the sacred dust, and when not observed, turns a tearful glance towards the wall on which hangs near a Clodion the profile of Mimi or Musette.

I am speaking of the poet alone. As a journalist, as a writer, as a wit, he had other ways. Henry Murger was a child of Bohemia; he had dwelt in its seven castles so long sought by Charles Nodier, and it is not in so strange a country, where paradoxes are commonplaces, that many illusions can be preserved. The verdicts of wiseacres are reversed forthwith, and picaresque wisdom is condensed into maxims by the side of which La Rochefoucauld's appear childish.

No one there is duped by anything or anybody, and the Bohemian, though in the midst of civilised life, attains to the suspicious sagacity of the Mohican. His defensive weapons are the arrows of wit, and some of his kind do not scruple to poison them. Murger, as I have said, never belonged to that class, but his hand was steady, his eye true, and his flashing bolts always struck their mark. Tender-hearted, he was sceptically minded; on returning from a sentimental turn in the woods, he took a turn behind the scenes at the theatre, and the journalist rallied the lover so hard that no one would have been tempted to make fun of him, not even his own mistress.

Murger had long since left the country which artists and poets traverse, at the beginning of their career, at least, when fathers refuse allowances and budding talent gives promise only of a future harvest; but he seemed to dwell in it still, so much did his thoughts delight to go back to that time of erratic liberty and of joyous want, in which hope bites so gaily with its beautiful teeth the hard bread of misery; and indeed, it is the happiest time, and I can understand the regrets felt for its disappearance. But it lasts a few years only, and there is no sadder sight than a gray-haired Bohemian or

college student. The Philistines, of yore the victims of so many practical jokes, are rightly entitled to rally him.

Murger lived at Marlotte, near Fontainebleau, and in his waking dreams he often lost himself in the forest, in spite of the guiding lines and the footpaths laid out by the man who has been surnamed the Sylvan; but inspiration came to the poet just when he lost his way. There, in the heart of strong, healthy nature, far from the feverish bustle of the city, that charming writer worked slowly and leisurely, so that at times his love of perfection seemed to be idleness. He lived his youth over again within himself, and reproduced it in tales sad but smiling, bright yet tender. During the whole summer long he vanished from all eyes, but in winter he occasionally went into society, which ever welcomed him gladly. He might be met on the boulevard, in magazine offices, and in his prodigal conversation he scattered in fifteen minutes more clever hits than were needed for a whole play.

His book, "Winter Nights," opens with a sonnet by way of preface, in which the author banteringly wishes all sorts of prosperity to the being who may be benevolent enough, artless enough, old-

fashioned enough, to pay a crown, in these days of prose, for three hundred pages of verse. This sonnet, to use one of Murger's own expressions, is the shrill fife which jeers at the violoncello, for naught can be more tender, more suave, more full of love, than the poems to which this buffoon sonnet is prefixed.

Love, as understood by Murger, is of a particular sort. It is vain to look in his work for ardent prayers, hyperbolical compliments, exaggerated lamentations, any more than for high-flown dithyrambics and odes of triumphant intoxication; nor must one look for deep despair, for unending sobs, and cries that rend the heavens. Love with him shows itself mostly in the form of remembrance. If love has been fortunate, it is silent, nor will it speak unless it has suffered from betrayal, infidelity, or death. When pleasure itself was silent, grief now utters a sigh. Indeed, what Murger likes in love is suffering; he delights to feel the thorn rankling in the wound, and would not have it drawn. Leaning sadly on his elbow, he watches the red drops form and fall one by one, nor will he stanch the flow, even if his life is to ebb away with it. He did not choose his mistress; chance formed their ephemeral

tie, caprice will loosen it; the swallow came in by the open window; some fine day it will fly away, obeying its migratory instinct. The poet knows it, and it is unnecessary to repeat to him Shakespeare's words, "Frailty, thy name is woman." He has foreseen the betrayal, yet he suffers from it, and mourns over it with such gentle bitterness, with such tearful irony, with such resigned sadness, that the reader shares his emotion. Perhaps he did not love the woman he regrets when she was faithful to him, but now, transfigured as she is by absence, he worships her. A charming figure has replaced a commonplace ideal, and Musette becomes the equal of Béatrix or Laura.

Two poems — "The Requiem of Love" and "Musette's Song" — in that part of the book entitled "Lovers," strike the key-note of Murger's poetry. In the first, the poet, addressing himself to the mistress who had wrung his heart with feverish, cruel delight, like the Chinese princess who almost fainted as she tore with her long, transparent nails the most precious silken stuffs, seeks an air to which he may sing the requiem of his dead love. He tries one after another, but every melody recalls a remembrance.

"Oh, not that motive!" cries the poet; "my heart, which I believed dead, trembles in my breast. I have heard it so often warbled by your lips. Nor that waltz, — that waltz which hurt me so much! Still less that *lied* which Germans sang in the Meudon woods and which we repeated together! No music, — but let us talk of our old love without hatred or anger." And Murger recalls the winter evenings spent in the little room, by the fireside on which the kettle hums its regular refrain; the long walks in spring through the meadows and the woods, and the innocent delights enjoyed in the midst of kindly nature; he composes once more that eternal poem of youth which six thousand years have never made old. Then comes the disappointment. One day the poet is alone, the fair one is gone. Good-bye to the gray shoes, the linen dress and the straw hat adorned with a natural flower! Rich silks rustle around the slender form, a cashmere shawl hangs in folds from the shoulders below the straying blond hair, a costly bracelet sparkles on the plump arm, rings cover the fingers, formerly browner, but now white through idleness. He might have expected it, the story is trite and common, the poet himself laughs madly at

it. "But my laughter is a sarcasm; my pen, as I write, trembles in my hand, and when I smile, my tears, like a hot shower, wash out the words upon the paper."

The second, which is "Musette's Song," strikes me as a perfect masterpiece of grace, tenderness, and originality. I cannot do better than to transcribe it, it is the best way to praise such a poem: —

"Yesterday, as I saw the swallow bringing back to us the time of spring, I remembered the fair one who loved me when she had time, and during the long, long day peaceful I gazed upon the old almanac of the year gone by, when she and I so greatly loved.

"No, my youth is not yet dead, nor is the thought of you vanished now; for if at my door you were to knock, my heart, Musette, would open quick, since at your name it always starts. O thou dear Muse of faithlessness, come back again to eat with me the blessed bread of happiness.

"The furniture of our little room, these dear old friends of our dead love, already smile at the mere hope of your return. Come back; you will recognise, my dear, all those who your departure mourned, — the little bed, and the great glass in which so often you drank my share.

"Again you will wear that fair white dress with which of yore you were adorned; and as of yore, on Sunday next into the woods we'll wander free. Under the arbour at even

seated, again we 'll drink the bright, clear wine in which your song its wing did dip before in air it flew away.

"The kindly god who bears no grudge for the naughty tricks you have played to me, will not refuse to grant a moon to light our kissings in the grove. Lovely nature you shall find as fair to-day as then, and ever, O my witching dear, ready upon our loves to smile.

"Musette, to whom remembrance came when carnival time drew to an end, on one fine morning returned to me like capricious bird to its old nest. But as I kissed the faithless one, my heart no emotion felt, and Musette — Musette no more — said I was no more myself.

"Farewell, begone, my dear, dear one; for now indeed, with our last love, our youth is buried deep within the old almanac. Only by stirring up the ashes of the fair days it once did hold can remembrance ever give us back the key to ope our lost paradise."

Two poems full of sad presentiment — alas, too true! — close the book. The one is an almost caressing appeal to death; the other a sort of testament, half serious, half ironical, in which the author, doubting whether he will be able to take his seat among the group of elect who will see "l'Africaine," makes his last will and arranges for his funeral, and draws a design for his tomb. Thomas Hood, the witty editor of "Punch" and the author of that "Song of the Shirt"

which made such a sensation in England, also indulged in that gloomy fancy of drawing his own monument, and for epitaph he put on it, "He wrote the 'Song of the Shirt'." So might be written on Murger's tomb, "He wrote 'Musette's Song'."

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

BORN IN 1821 — DIED IN 1867

SHORT though his life was, — he was scarce forty-six when he died, — Charles Baudelaire had time to make his mark and to inscribe his name upon that wall of the nineteenth century on which are already written so many signatures, many of them no longer legible; but his will remain, I have no doubt, for it is that of a man whose talent was original and strong, who disdained even to excess the commonplaces which make popularity easy, who cared only for what was rare, difficult, and strange, whose literary conscience was quick, who never, in spite of the necessities of life, let go a work before he thought it perfect, who weighed every word as the "Misers" of Quentin Matsys weigh doubtful ducats, who read proofs ten times over, who submitted his poems to the subtile critic that was himself, and who sought to realise with unwearying efforts the particular ideal which he had set up.

Born in India and knowing English thoroughly, he began with translations of Edgar Poe, which are so admirable that they appear to be original, and that the author's thoughts are improved by the passage from one tongue into the other. Baudelaire naturalised in France that author whose imagination is so learnedly eccentric, and by the side of whom Hoffmann is but a Paul de Kock in fantastic literature. Thanks to Baudelaire, I enjoyed the uncommonly rare experience of a totally unknown literary savour; my mental palate was as much surprised as when I drank at the Exposition some of the American drinks, sparkling mixtures of ice, soda water, ginger, and other exotic ingredients. Into what mad transports of delight I was thrown by the reading of "The Gold Bug," the "Fall of the House of Usher," and all those tales so truly called extraordinary. The fantastic effects produced by algebraic and scientific processes, tales such as "The Murder in the Rue Morgue," wrought out as carefully as a judicial inquiry, and especially "The Stolen Letter," which in its sagacious inductions could give points to the cleverest detectives, excited curiosity to the highest degree, and Baudelaire's name became in some sort inseparable from the American author's.

The translations were preceded by a most interesting study of Edgar Poe from the biographical and metaphysical point of view. It was impossible to analyse more cleverly a genius so eccentric that at times it seems to border on madness, and which has for its basis a pitiless logic that carries the consequences of an idea to extremes. The mixture of heat and coldness, of intoxication and mathematical processes, the strident raillery flushed with most poetical lyrical effusions were thoroughly understood by Baudelaire. He felt the liveliest sympathy for the proud and eccentric character which so greatly shocked American cant, an unpleasant variety of English cant, and the assiduous reading of that dizzy mind had a great influence upon him. Edgar Poe was not only a writer of extraordinary tales, a journalist whom no one has surpassed in the art of arranging a scientific canard, a supreme practical joker, playing upon gaping credulity; he was also an æsthete of the very first order, a very great poet, whose art was most refined and complex. His poem of "The Raven" produces, by the gradation of strophes and the disquieting persistency of the refrain, an intense effect of melancholy, terror, and fatal presentiment which it is difficult to resist. It is not impugning

Baudelaire's originality to say that in the "Flowers of Evil" there is a reminiscence, as it were, of Edgar Poe's mysterious manner, with a background of Romanticist colouring.

A few years ago, it not being my habit to wait for the death of my friends before praising them, I wrote an essay on Baudelaire, prefixed to a selection of his poems included in the "Collection of French Poets," in which occurs a passage on the "Flowers of Evil," the most important and the most individual work of the author. As this passage cannot be suspected of posthumous complaisance, I may repeat about the poet, who has died so prematurely and unfortunately, what I said about him when alive:—

"In one of Hawthorne's tales, there is a description of a curious garden in which a botanist, who is also a toxicologist, has collected the flora of poisonous plants. These plants, with their strangely cut leaves of a blackish, or glaucous mineral-green, as if they were dyed with sulphate of copper, possess a sinister and formidable beauty; in spite of their charm, they are felt to be dangerous; their haughty, provoking, and perfidious attitude betrays the consciousness of mighty power or irresistible seductiveness. Their blooms, fiercely striped and barred, of a purple colour resembling clotted blood, or chlorotic white, exhale bitter, intoxicating perfumes; in

their poisonous calyxes dew is transformed into *aqua tofana*, and around them buzz only cantharides with their corselets of green and gold, and steel-blue flies whose sting causes carbuncles. The euphorbia, the deadly nightshade, the henbane, the hemlock, the belladonna mingle their cold venom with the burning poisons of the tropics and of India. The manchineel displays its little apples, as deadly as those that hung from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the upas tree drops its milky juice which burns deeper than acid. Above the garden, hovers a deadly vapour which suffocates birds as they pass through it. Yet the doctor's daughter lives with impunity amid these mephitic miasmas; her lungs breathe in without danger an atmosphere which to any one else than her father and herself would be certain death. She makes necklaces of these flowers, she adorns her hair and perfumes her bosom with them, she bites their petals as maids nibble at the petals of roses. Slowly saturated with venomous juices, she has become herself a living poison; she neutralises all others. Her beauty, like that of the plants of the garden, has something weird, fatal, morbid about it. Her hair, of a bluish black, contrasts strangely with her complexion, dead pale and greenish, on which her lips show so purple that they seem to be stained by some sanguine berry; her strange smile reveals teeth set in dark-red gums, and her fixed glance fascinates and repels. She looks like one of those Javanese women, vampires of love, diurnal succubæ, whose love exhausts in a fortnight the blood, the marrow, and the soul of a European. And yet she is a virgin, she is the doctor's daughter, and languishes

in solitude. Love seeks in vain to acclimatise itself in that atmosphere, out of which she herself could not live.

"I have never read the 'Flowers of Evil' of Charles Baudelaire without thinking involuntarily of this tale of Hawthorne's. His flowers also have sombre, metallic tints, verdigrised fronds, and intoxicating odours. His muse resembles the doctor's daughter, whom no poisons can harm and whose complexion, by its bloodless pallor, tells of the atmosphere in which she lives."

Baudelaire was pleased with this comparison, and he liked to see in it the personification of his talent. He also gloried in this remark of a great poet: "You have given to the heaven of art a strange, ghastly beam; you have created a new shudder." And yet it would be a great mistake to suppose that among his mandragoras and poppies and colchicums there is not to be met with here and there a blooming rose with innocuous perfume, some great Indian flower opening its white petals to the pure air of heaven. When Baudelaire depicts the ugly things of humanity and civilisation, it is with secret horror; he has no liking for them; he looks upon them as violations of the universal rhythm. When he was called immoral, — a big word which people in France know how to use nearly as well as people in America, — he was as

much surprised as if he had heard jessamine praised for its honesty, and bitter ranunculus stigmatised for its wickedness.

Besides Poe's tales, Baudelaire translated the same author's "Adventures of Allen Gordon Pym," which end with that fearful swallowing up in the whirlpool of the Antarctic Pole. He also put into French the cosmogonic dream called "Eureka," in which the American author, making use of the celestial mechanics of La Place, seeks to guess at the secret of the universe, and believes he has found it. How difficult was the translation of such a piece of work can be readily imagined.

Under the title of "The Artificial Paradise," Baudelaire summed up, at the same time introducing into it his own reflections, the work of De Quincey, the English opium-eater, and made of it a sort of treatise which must necessarily in several places be almost identical with Balzac's "Theory of Stimulants," which has remained unpublished. It forms most interesting reading, illumined as it is by phantasmagoria and the depicting of the most brilliant, the most curious, the most terrible hallucinations produced by this seductive poison, which stupefies China and the East with its fic-

titious bliss. The author blames the man who seeks to avoid inevitable pain and rises into an artificial paradise only to fall into a blacker hell.

Baudelaire was a most sagacious art critic, and he brought to the appreciation of painting a metaphysical subtlety and an originality in his point of view which make one regret that he did not devote more time to this sort of work. The pages which he wrote about Delacroix are most remarkable.

Towards the end of his life he wrote a few short poems in prose, but in rhythmic prose, wrought out and polished like the most concentrated poetry. They are strange fancies, landscapes of another world, unknown figures which you fancy you have seen elsewhere, spectral realities, phantoms possessed of terrible reality. These productions appeared somewhat at haphazard here and there, in various reviews, and it is much to be desired that they should be collected in book form, with the addition of any others which the author may have kept in his desk.

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE

BORN IN 1790 — DIED IN 1869

I DO not intend to write a biography of Lamartine, still less a detailed estimate of his work, but I do wish to bring that great figure out of the half shadow in which he enveloped himself for some years past in the solitude and silence of his later days, and to place it in the light which henceforth will never again desert it.

As a humble poet, enslaved to prose through the necessities of journalism, I shall try to pass judgment on a great poet. It is rash of me to do so, for my brow does not reach his feet, but statues are best appreciated from below. His deserves to be carved out of the finest Parian or Carrara marble, free from all spot or stain.

Lamartine has told himself, in a style which no one else can imitate, his earliest recollections of his childhood and his family; he has told of the opening of his young soul to life, to reverie, to thought, — immortal

confidences of genius which the public collects and in which it takes pleasure, for each can fancy that that voice, so intimate and penetrating, speaks to him alone as to an unknown friend. So I shall let Lamartine seek, through his reveries, his passions, his loves, his travels, in the course of a life apparently idle, the way which was to be followed, and which is not always easily made out amid the tangled minglings of human affections. No doubt all the generous sentiments which he was to express so admirably, — love, faith, the religious worship of nature, the longing for heaven, — were already surging within him; but the world as yet saw in him only a handsome youth, aristocratic, elegant, of perfect manners and destined to win success in drawing-rooms. He had twice travelled in Italy. At that time he said nothing of the impression which must have been produced upon him by the clear heavens, the sea bluer even than the sky, the vast prospects, the trees with shining, strong foliage, the ruins magnificent in their destruction, the vigorous, warm-coloured nature through which wandered like mute shadows inhabitants bowed under the yoke of servitude and under the greatness of their past. But the poetry of it all was slowly welling up within his

heart, the secret treasure was growing every day, and new pearls were being added to the mysterious casket which was to open later. If he rivalled Byron, to whom he dedicated an epistle equal to the finest passages of "Childe Harold," it was merely as a dandy.

Having returned to France, he allowed some years to pass by in that feverish yet fruitful idleness whence spring great works; and in 1820 appeared a modest volume for which he had some difficulty in finding a publisher. It was the "Meditations." This book was an event infrequent in the course of ages. It contained a whole new world, a world of poetry, more difficult perhaps to discover than America or the Atlantides. While he seemed to be coming and going with indifference among other men, Lamartine was travelling over unknown seas, his eye fixed upon his star, drawn towards a shore on which no one had yet stepped, and had returned victorious like Columbus, — he had discovered the soul.

It would be difficult to understand to-day, after so many revolutions, downfalls, and vicissitudes in human affairs, after seeing so many literary systems tried and forgotten, so much extravagance in thought and in language, the universal enthusiasm evoked by the "Medi-

tations." It was like a breath of freshness and of rejuvenation, like the fluttering of wings passing over souls. Young men and maidens and women carried their admiration to the point of worship; Lamartine's name was on every lip, and the Parisians, who are not poetic, after all, filled with madness like the Abderites who incessantly repeated the chorus of Euripides, "O Love, mighty Love," quoted, as they met, the stanzas of "The Lake." Never was there so great a success.

The fact is, Lamartine was not merely a poet, he was poetry itself. His chaste, elegant, noble language seemed to ignore wholly the ugly and mean side of life. As the book was, so was the author, and the best frontispiece which could have been selected for the volume of verse was the poet's own portrait; a lyre in his hands and on his shoulders a cloak blown about by the storm were in no wise ridiculous.

What deep, new accents, what ethereal aspirations, what upspringing towards the ideal, what effusions of love, what tender and melancholy notes, what sighs and questionings of the soul which no poet had yet caused to sound! In the pictures drawn by Lamartine, the heavens always occupy much space. He needs that space to move about easily, and to draw broad

circles around his thoughts. He floats, he flies, he soars; like the swan resting on its great, white wings, sometimes in the light, sometimes in a light haze, sometimes, too, in storm clouds, he rarely settles on the earth, and soon resumes his flight with the first breeze that ruffles his plumes. That fluid, transparent, aerial element which opens before him and closes behind him, is his natural road; he maintains himself in it without difficulty for many hours, and from his lofty heights he sees the landscape turn faint and blue, the waters shimmer and the buildings rise in vaporous effacement.

Lamartine is not one of those marvellous artist poets who hammer verse as if it were a blade of gold upon a steel anvil, making closer the grain of the metal and shaping it to sharp, accurate outlines. He ignores or disdains every excess of form, and with the negligence of the nobleman, who rimes only when minded, without restricting himself to technical matters, he writes admirable poems as he rides through the woods, as he floats in his boat along some shady bank, or leans on the window of one of his castles. His verse rolls on with harmonious murmur, like the waves of Italian or Greek waters, which bear on their transparent crests branches

of laurel, golden fruits fallen from the shore, and reflect the sky, the birds or the sails, or break on the strand in brilliant, silvery foam. Its full, sweeping, successive undulating forms, impossible to fix as water, reach their aim, and, fluid as they are, bear thoughts as the sea bears vessels, whether a frail skiff or a ship of the line.

There is a magic charm in that breathing verse, which swells and sinks like the breast of ocean ; one is carried away by the melody, by the chorus of rimes, as by the distant song of sailors or sirens. Lamartine is probably the greatest magician in poetry.

His broad, vague manner of writing suits the exalted spirituality of his nature. The soul does not need to be carved like Greek marble. Lights and sounds, breathings, opaline tints, rainbow colours, blue moonlight-beams, diaphanous gauze, aerial draperies swelling and rising in the breeze, suffice to depict and envelop it. The Latin expression, *musæ ales*, seems to have been invented for Lamartine.

In that immortal poem, "The Lake," in which passion speaks a tongue which the finest music has never equalled, vaporous nature appears as through a silver gauze, distant, afar, painted with a few touches

so it shall serve as a framework and a background to that unforgettable remembrance; and yet everything is seen, the light in the heavens, the water and the rocks, the trees on the shore and the mountains on the horizon, and every wave that casts its foam upon the adored feet of Elvira.

And yet, because in Lamartine there is always a mist and a sound of the æolian harp, it is not to be taken for granted that he is merely a melodious lake poet, and can only sigh softly of melancholy and love. If he sighs, he can also speak and shout; he rules as easily as he charms; his angelic voice, which seems to issue from the depths of the heavens, can assume at need a virile accent.

At Naples, a marriage brought about by that admiration which attracts women to the poet of their dreams, made him happy and rich. A young lady, like those charming, romantic heroines of Shakespeare, who are attracted by a glance, and who are faithful unto death, brought him her love and a most princely fortune. France saw the phenomenon, rare in our country, of a poet who was not poor, and whose fancy could unfold itself splendidly in the full sunshine. People affect to believe that poverty, that lean, harsh nurse, is better for

genius than riches. It is a mistake. A poet's nature is prodigal, careless, generous; it loves luxury as the material expression of poesy; it loves to realise its caprices in its verse and in its life, to form for itself an environment from which shall be excluded every ugly, mean, prosaic thing. Mathematics are repugnant to it (Lamartine had a horror of them and looked upon them as obstacles to thought), and with a hand that never counts it draws from the three wells of Abul Khasim the dinars which it scatters around like a golden rain. Untroubled by any of those obstacles which wear out the strength of the greatest minds, Lamartine was enabled to give free course to his genius, to expand completely, and the chill of poverty did not wither its magnificent flowers.

After the "Meditations" came the "Harmonies," in which the poet's flight reaches to the greatest heights, — it seems to take him within the starry regions. There are in this volume poems of ineffable beauty and of grand melancholy. Never since the days of Job did the human soul utter, in the presence of the formidable mysteries of life and death, more desperate, heart-breaking plaints than in the "Novissima Verba."

The success of the "Harmonies" was immense, but

though the work was superior to its predecessor, its success could not surpass that of the "Meditations." Admiration had at once bestowed on Lamartine all that it can give to a man; it had exhausted in his favour its flowers and its censers; no additional beam could be put into the aureole of the poet, the splendour of his noonday could add nothing to the glory of his dawn.

Amid these sounds of triumph, Lamartine had started on his voyage to the Orient, not as a humble pilgrim with white staff in his hand, and scallops on shoulder, but with royal luxury, on a vessel chartered by himself, which bore for the emirs presents worthy of Haroun al Raschid; and once he landed, travelling with caravans of Arab horses that he had purchased, buying the houses in which he had slept, erecting in the desert tents as splendid as Solomon's pavilions of gold and purple. Lord Byron alone had made poetry travel so sumptuously. The tribes, amazed, hastened with acclamations along his way, and nothing would have been easier for the poet than to have had himself proclaimed Caliph. Lady Hester Stanhope, that illuminated Englishwoman who inhabited Lebanon, offered him the horse whose back in its outline resembles a sort of saddle and which

Hakim, the king of the Druses, is to ride in his next incarnation. She predicted to him that one day he would hold in his aristocratic hand the destinies of his country.

Through all this Lamartine passed on, tranquil, almost indifferent, like a high-bred lord whom nothing astonishes and who feels that all the homage paid him is his due. He accepted all the worship with a kindly smile, but without being intoxicated by it. It appeared quite natural to him that he should be handsome, elegant, rich, endowed with genius, and that he should excite admiration and love. But that almost superhuman happiness was not to last. The ancient Greeks believed in the existence of jealous divinities which they called Moiræ, the jealous eyes of which were hurt by the sight of the happiness which they enjoyed spoiling. It was to appease the Moiræ that Polycrates, too happy, cast into the sea his ring, which a fisherman brought back. No doubt one of these wicked deities met the poet on his triumphal tour and was shocked by his happiness and glory, by the union in him of so marvellous gifts. She stretched out her withered hand, and Julia, the lovely child, who was accompanying her father to those sunny lands in

which life seems to renew its energies, bowed her head like a flower touched by the ploughshare, and the vessel which had sailed with white wings, came back with black sails, bringing a bier.

The loss was irreparable, the despair was lasting, the wound one of those which can never close and which ever bleed. No doubt it was reserved to the two greatest poets of our day to feel that grief which cannot be consoled in order that they should pay for their glory.

The muse alone with its rhythms can soothe and sometimes lull that regret for the dear being lost for no apparent reason. Lamartine published his "Jocelyn," a tender and pure epic of the soul, in which are related, not the brilliant adventures of a hero, but the sufferings of a lowly, unknown heart; a delicate masterpiece full of feeling and of tears of Alpine whiteness, as pure as the snow of the highest peaks which no impure breath reaches, and where love, which is unaware of its own existence, so chaste is it, might form the subject of contemplation for angels. Never was a success more sympathetic, never was a book more eagerly read and more wetted with tears.

The "Angel's Fall" was not so well understood.

Magnificent passages rich in Oriental colour, which seemed to be leaves taken from the Bible, were but half successful, and that because of the strangeness of the subject, the singularity of the pictures drawn from a world anterior to our own, the excessive grandeur of personages greater than human nature; and further, I must confess, through increasing carelessness in composition and style.

After the publication of the "Poetic Recollections" with their long vibrations, last echoes of the "Meditations" and of the "Harmonies," the poet bade farewell to the muse and laid down his harp, never again to take it up. He was filled with the desire for a practical and active life. He had been attaché and life-guard, he now wished to be a deputy. People who think they are serious-minded because they are prosaic, unaware that poetry alone influences the soul and that imagination carries away the crowd, sneered as they saw the dreamer who was called "Elvira's poet," approach the tribune; but soon it was understood that he who can sing can also speak, and that the poet has a golden mouth. From his harmonious lips speeches came winged, vibrating, and possessing like the bee at once honey and a sting. Poetry is

easily transformed into eloquence; it has passion, warmth, thought, generous feeling, prophetic instinct, and — no matter what one may say to the contrary — that high, supreme reason which soars over everything and does not allow general truth to be troubled by accidental facts.

The Girondins brought about the Revolution, or at least, greatly helped it. Lamartine found himself in the presence of the billows which he had let loose, and which broke in foam and thunder at his feet, rolling on their angry crests the *débris* of the last monarchy; he accepted the mission to harangue the stormy sea, to reason with the tempest, to hold back the lightning within the clouds. It was a dangerous mission, which he accomplished like a nobleman and a hero. Then it was plainly seen that all poets were not like Horace, who fled from the battlefield, *non bene relicta parmula.* He had cast a spell upon ferocious instincts, and the tamed tumult roared under his balcony to make him come forth, to see him and hear him. As soon as he appeared, the crowd was silent, awaiting some noble words, some grave advice, some generous thought, and it withdrew satisfied, bearing away with it the seeds of harmony and of devotion to humanity.

The poet exposed himself to the bullet which might be shot by some too radical utopist or too backward a fanatic, with the high-bred disdain of the nobleman who despises death as being vulgar and common, — a superior sort of dandyism which middle-class people find it difficult to imitate. If he threw himself of his own free will into that abyss, it was because he had no interest whatever in it, and was sure to destroy himself. Then was seen a thing strange indeed in our modern civilisation, — a man playing in open day and in his own person the part of a moderating Tyrtæus, of an Orpheus, tamer of wild beasts, *doctus lenire tigres*, urging to well doing, calling away from evil, and stretching over disorder the thought of harmony and of beauty. Without a police, without an army, without any repressive means, he held in by pure poetry a whole excited people. He uttered in the presence of the extreme republicans these sublime words: "The tricolour flag has travelled around the world with our glory, the red flag has travelled around the Champ de Mars only." And the tricolour continued to wave triumphant in the breeze.

He spent his genius, his health, his fortune in this business with the most generous carelessness. He

made the greatest human effort that ever was tried; he stood alone against an unbridled multitude. For several days he it was who saved France and gave her time to await better times. And as nothing is so ungrateful as terror, once peril is past, he lost his popularity. Those who owed him their lives perhaps, their riches and their safety unquestionably, thought him ridiculous when, after having thrown to the winds for their benefit all his treasure, with the noble confidence of the poet who thinks he may ask for a drachma in return for a talent from those whom he had spellbound and preserved, he sat down on the threshold of his ruined home and, holding out his helmet, said, "*Date obolum Belisario.*" Debts were behind him, forcing him to hold out his hand.

He was certainly a great enough man to play with his creditors the scene between Don Juan and M. Dimanche, but he would not do it, and France beheld the sad spectacle of the poet growing old and bowed from dawn till night under the yoke of paying copy. The demigod who remembered heaven wrote novels, pamphlets, and articles like us. Pegasus cut his furrow, dragging a plough which, had he outstretched his wings, he could have carried away amid the stars.

ALFRED DE VIGNY

BORN IN 1799 — DIED IN 1863

COUNT ALFRED DE VIGNY was one of the most illustrious members of the Romanticist school, and although his reserved and refined nature led him to keep apart from the crowd, he did not fear to face it when the sacred doctrine was at stake. In spite of his dislike for the rough battles of the stage, he translated Shakespeare's "Othello" with courageous fidelity and braved the stormy pit. This translation, in which accuracy never turns into awkwardness, and which has all the freedom of an original work, has not remained in the repertory, and it was only after an interval of about thirty years that Rouvière brought out again and performed "The Moor of Venice" upon a Boulevard stage. The preface, which is a masterpiece of grace, wit, and irony, is full of ideas new at that time and still new to-day.

Few writers have realised the ideal of a poet as fully as Alfred de Vigny. Of noble birth, bearing a name as

melodious as the sound of the lyre, of seraphic beauty, which even in his later age suffering alone could diminish, rich enough not to be driven by vulgar necessity to wretched labours day by day, he preserved his pure, calm, and poetic literary physiognomy. He was indeed the poet of Eloa, the virgin born of a tear of Christ, who came down, drawn by pity, to console Lucifer. This poem, which is perhaps the most beautiful and the most perfect in the French language, could have been written by no one but de Vigny, even amid all that company of great poets who shone in the heaven of letters; he alone knew the secret of those pearly grays, of those soft reflections, of that blue moonlight, which make the immaterial visible against the white background of the divine light. But the men of to-day appear to have forgotten "Eloa;" it is rarely spoken of or quoted, though a priceless gem set in the golden gates of the tabernacle. "Symeta," "Dolorida," "The Horn," "The Sérieuse Frigate," exhibit in every part exquisite concordance between form and thought; they are priceless flagons holding concentrated essences the perfume of which never dies.

Like all the artists of the new school, Alfred de Vigny wrote as well in prose as in verse. He gave us

"Cinq-Mars," the novel which in our literature comes closest to Walter Scott's work; "Stello," "Military Grandeur and Servitude," in which is "The Red Seal," a masterpiece of description, interest, and feeling which it is impossible to read without tears springing to one's eyes; "Chatterton," his great success; "The Maréchale d'Ancre," a drama which proved to be a semi-failure; "Getting off with a Fright," a delightful pastel; and a translation of "The Merchant of Venice," which ought to be performed as a homage to his memory in these days of ours, when masterpieces are none too numerous.

Never did poetry have a more ardent defender than de Vigny, and although Sainte-Beuve did say of him, very kindly and with admiration, when speaking of the battles of the Romanticist school, "De Vigny, more reserved, before noon returned within his ivory tower," yet from the depths of his retreat he maintained the sacred rights of thought against the oppression of material things; he loudly claimed, though he possessed both, leisure and bread for the poet. That was his fixed idea. He developed it in every possible aspect in "Stello" and in "Chatterton"; he bestowed upon it the dazzling consecration of the drama. He rightly

looks upon the poet as the pariah of modern civilisation, driven out during his lifetime and stripped after his death, for he alone cannot bequeath to posterity the fruit of his work.

When we think of de Vigny, we involuntarily imagine him like a swan, moving along, his head somewhat bent back, his wings half filled with the breeze, floating upon those transparent waters of English parks, a Virginia water rayed with a moonbeam that filters through the dull green of the foliage of the willows. He is the white light in a beam, a silver streak on a limpid mirror, a sigh amid water flowers and pale foliage. He may also be compared to one of the nebulous milky drops on the blue bosom of the heaven, which shine less than other stars because they are placed higher and farther away.

CHATTERTON

DECEMBER, 1857

ONE of the deep impressions of my youth was made upon me by the first performance of "Chatterton," which took place, as every one knows, on February 12, 1835. So the other evening, when I was going to the Théâtre-Français, I felt a certain uneasiness, in no wise caused, I hasten to say, by the talent of Alfred de Vigny, — I was uncertain about myself. Would I feel again the emotions of my youth, the artless and trustful enthusiasm, the perfect consonance with the work, all the feelings which then animated me? When age has come, as a great poet has said, one must avoid coming across the opinions or the women one loved at twenty. My admiration, however, was more fortunate.

When "Chatterton" was first performed, it was even more distinct from the general run of plays than it is to-day. That was the heyday of the historical, Shakespearean drama, filled with incidents, crowded

with characters, bedizened with local colour, full of fire and fury. Buffoonery and lyric poetry rubbed elbows in it in accordance with the prescribed formula. The cap and bells of the court jester were heard in it, and the good Toledo blade, so much ridiculed since then, thrust and carved all the time. In "Chatterton" the drama is intimate; it is merely the exposition of an idea. There are no facts, there is no action, save perchance the suicide of the poet which is anticipated from the first word, so it was not supposed that the work could possibly succeed on the stage; and yet, in spite of the previsions of experts, its success was maintained. Youth in those days was intoxicated with art, passion, and poetry. All heads were turned, all hearts were beating high with boundless emotion, the fate of Icarus affrighted no one. "Wings! wings! wings!" was the cry heard on all hands; "wings! even if we must fall into the sea. To fall from heaven, one must have risen there, even were it but for a second, and that is nobler than to crawl all one's life upon earth." Such exaltation may seem absurd to the generation which is now as old as we were then, but it was sincere, and many proved it over whom the grass has grown thick and green for many a day. The pit be-

fore which Chatterton declaimed his lines was full of wan, long-haired youths, firmly convinced that there was no other decent occupation on earth than writing verse or painting, — art, as they then said, — and who looked down upon the *bourgeois* with a contempt which that of the Heidelberg or Jena students for the Philistines scarcely approaches. The *bourgeois*, — why, they included pretty nearly everybody: bankers, stockbrokers, lawyers, merchants, shop-keepers, and others; whoever, in a word, did not form part of the mystic circle, but prosaically earned his living. Never did such a thirst for glory burn human lips. As for money, no one gave it a thought. More than one in those days, as in that enumeration of impossible professions which Théodore de Banville relates with such irony, — more than one might have exclaimed, with perfect truth, "I am a lyric poet and I live by my profession." Whoever has not lived during that mad, hot, over-excited, but generous time cannot imagine to what an extent the forgetfulness of material life, the intoxication, or, if you will, the infatuation of art carried obscure and frail victims, who preferred to die of it rather than to give up their dream. In vain did men hear during the night the report of solitary pistols.

You may judge, then, of the effect produced upon such people by the "Chatterton" of Alfred de Vigny, which, to be understood, must be replaced in the atmosphere of the time at which it was written.

The noble author, whose personal means always kept him free from such troubles, was always greatly interested in the fate of poets in our society. He developed his views at great length in "Stello, or The Consultations of the Black Doctor," of which "Chatterton" is but an episode worked over for the stage. His eager sympathy, his feminine sensibility, his warmth of pity make Alfred de Vigny understand and share the sufferings of delicate souls, hurt by brutal contact with reality. He claims for them life and reverie, — in other words, bread and leisure. As one listens to him every one agrees with him, so eloquent is he. And yet who shall judge whether the poet is truly a poet, and whether society ought to maintain him in leisure before inspiration has come to him from heaven? Are we to believe in the affirmations of pride, the advice of critics, or popular renown? For, once he has attained renown, the writer no longer needs help.

I do not think that any one ever lived absolutely on poetry save those who died of it. Poetry is not a

permanent state of the soul; the god visits the best endowed men but from time to time; the will has little or no action upon it. Alone among art workers, the poet cannot be laborious, for his work does not depend upon himself. No one, — I say it without fear of being contradicted even by the most illustrious, — no one is certain of having finished by evening the poem which he began in the morning, even if it contains but a few stanzas. He must remain bent over his desk, waiting until from the confused swarm of rimes one detaches itself and alights on his pen; or else he must rise and pursue in woods and streets the thought which escapes him. Verse is made of reverie, time, and chance, of a tear or a smile, a perfume or a remembrance. A stanza, forgotten in a corner of the memory like a larva in its cocoon, suddenly wakens and flies off with a rustling of wings; its time to bloom has come. In the midst of a very different occupation or of a serious conversation, invisible lips whisper in your ear the word that you lack, and the ode, suspended for months, is now finished. How can such work be appreciated, and especially how can it be remunerated? The idea of a man exclusively a poet, of a poet living on his work, cannot therefore be maintained. Because

some poems have been highly remunerated, it is not to be inferred that their authors could always have paid their way with that single resource. It is an accident, quite a modern one, due to reasons which it would not be difficult to state, and which have no bearing upon pure poetry.

I am aware that Alfred de Vigny does not present "Chatterton" as a generalisation, but as a painful exception. That unhappy youth could never have resigned himself to live; even had he never lacked for bread, he would have wrapped himself and died in his solitary pride. When the curtain, on rising, showed us the stage-setting somewhat faded by time, with its brown wainscoting, its greenish windows, and the wooden stairs, down which poor Kitty Bell falls at the close of the play, I looked in vain for Joanny upon the Quaker's chair, and on the other side for poor Madame Dorval. Geffroy alone stood in the centre of the stage, pale, dressed in black, grown older like everybody by some twenty-two years, which is perhaps a good deal for the poet who is only eighteen, but preserving the true spirit of the time, the deep meaning of the work, the bitter, romantic, and fatal aspect which delighted men in 1835.

The first part of the play seemed somewhat cold, especially to the spectators of the present generation, whose interests are so different from those of the men of former days. John Bell, accurate, positive, righteous according to law, with his practical and well-nigh irrefutable reasons, formerly excited violent antipathy; he was hated like the melodrama traitor, covered with the blackest of crimes; and when, like a commercial Bluebeard, he called upon his wife to account for a few pounds not entered upon the books, a shudder ran through the theatre. People dreaded to see him behead the trembling Kitty Bell with the edge of a flat ruler. Many a young, romantic woman, with pale complexion and long English curls, turned her eyes in melancholy fashion upon her husband, the classic husband, well fed and rosy, as if to draw attention to the parallel. Now John Bell, who objects to his machines being broken, and who affirms that a man is bound to pay by assiduous work for his share of the banquet of life or leave the table if he has no money, as rigorous to others as he has been to himself, strikes us as the one reasonable character in the play.

The Quaker, notwithstanding his excellent intentions, talks very childishly, and gives the impression,

as he sits on his chair, of a patriarch in his dotage. Kitty Bell loves chastely the penniless youth who only writes verses and walks about with gestures and declaiming verses, who is lean under his thin, worn, black coat. Not a woman understands her now, and most young girls think her absurd, for the modern maiden's ideal hero alights from a coupé, wears neat boots, suède gloves, has a cigar in his mouth, and in his pocket a purse stuffed with bank-notes and gold. In 1835 it seemed quite natural to fall in love with Chatterton, but how are we to-day to take any interest in an individual who has neither capital, income, houses nor real estate? — a man who will not even accept a position, because, forsooth, he has written "The Battle of Hastings," made up of imitations of the old Anglo-Saxon chronicles; and especially because he is a man of genius? The Lord Mayor and the young noblemen in their scarlet coats strike us now as very good-natured to take so much trouble about that surly maniac, and to keep on seeking him out with so much persistency. People do not take so much trouble nowadays, and lords do not climb the stairs of garrets where poets, nowadays at least, starve to death at leisure if such is their good pleasure; for

once a man ceases to be a poet, he ought to say so; life again becomes possible.

Nevertheless, the slowly elaborated emotion was at last attained, when was seen the bare, cold room, scarce lighted by a dying lamp, and into which the moon shone through the dirty panes with its white gleam and its dead face, the sad and sole companion of an agonising soul, the weakening inspirer of unfinished, hopeless work. The narrow bed, resembling a coffin more than a bed and better fitted for a body than for a living frame, on the side of which Chatterton seeks to force his virgin thought to sell itself for gold as does a courtesan, produced a sinister effect. More than one writer in that theatre recognised in it the representation, exaggerated no doubt but true at bottom, of his own weariness, his own intellectual struggle, his own moments of despair. Doubtless it is hard when Chimera smiles upon you with her languorously perfidious smile, caresses you with eyes whose strange gleams promise love, happiness, and glory, brushes your brow with its wings as it flies off into the infinite, and lets you familiarly place your hand upon its lion's quarters, — it is hard to let her fly away alone, annoyed and contemptuous like a woman whose confession has

not been understood, and to have thereafter to harness one's self to the heavy drag of a piece of work ordered beforehand. But what are you going to do about it? Cling to some duty, to some love, to some devotion, transform the price paid for that task-work into security, comfort, happiness for loved ones, and graciously sacrifice your pride on the altar of domestic life. Well, in that case, you will be neither Homer nor Dante nor Shakespeare, even had you been one of them if you had only written verse. The worst of it is that Pegasus, as may be seen in Schiller's ballad, is never, even when he condescends, a very good horse for the plough. He cuts some straight furrows and then he is off, he opens his great wings, breaks his traces, or if he cannot do so, carries off with him the ploughman and the plough, which he may let fall by and by, broken and shattered. The truth is that poetry is a fatal gift, a sort of curse to him who has received it at his birth. A great fortune even does not always prevent a poet from being unhappy. Byron's example is sufficient proof of this.

The close of the play moved the spectators as deeply as at the original performances. The purest and most violent passion fills it from end to end. Now it is no

longer a question of literature or poetry. As soon as Chatterton has made up his mind to die, he becomes a man again and ceases to be an abstraction; the drama passes from the brain into the heart; suppressed love breaks forth. Death is the third character in this supreme interview, and when Chatterton's lips touch the immaculate brow of Kitty Bell, that last kiss tells the poor woman that the wretched youth is about to die. John Bell may call as loudly as he pleases, the timid creature will not reply, but from the threshold of the death room will pitch down the stairs and fall upon her knees, hiding her innocently guilty head between the tear-wet leaves of her Bible.

The character of Kitty Bell, the angelic Puritan, the earthly sister of Eloa, is drawn with almost ideal purity. How chaste is her love, how concealed and contained her passion, how deep her modesty. Scarcely is her secret betrayed by a despairing sob, at the last moment. Every one knows that the part was one of the greatest successes of Madame Dorval; never perhaps did that superb actress rise so high. She played it with timid English grace; she managed in most motherly fashion the two babes, pure intermediaries of unconfessed love; she displayed the sweetest

feminine charity towards the forsaken youth of genius rebelling against fate; she sought with light touch to soothe the wounds of his suffering pride. She addressed to him the very beating of her heart, the very caresses of her soul, in the slow words she spoke to him, her eyes cast down, her hands resting on the heads of her two dear little ones as if to seek strength against herself. And what an agonising cry she uttered, what forgetfulness of herself she exhibited when she rolled, struck down by grief, down the steps which she had climbed with convulsive effort, with almost mad jerks, well-nigh on her knees, her feet caught in her dress, her arms outstretched, her soul projected out of the body which could not follow it!

Ah! if Chatterton had for the last time opened his eyes weighed down by opium and seen that dreadful grief, he would have died happy, sure that he had been loved as no one ever was, and that he would not long await in another world the soul which was kin to his own.

PAUL DE KOCK

BORN IN 1794 — DIED IN 1870

THERE is nothing new but what has been forgotten, and probably no one among the younger generation of to-day has any idea of the great reputation which Paul de Kock enjoyed some thirty or forty years ago. There never was an author more popular in the real meaning of the word. He was read by everybody, by the statesman as well as by the commercial traveller and the schoolboy, by the great ladies in society and by the *grisettes*. He was as famous abroad as at home, and Russians studied Parisian manners in the pages of his novels. The Romanticist school, with its lofty, chivalrous sentiments, its lyrical outbursts, its love for the Middle Ages and local colour, its exaggerated idea of passion, its wealth of Shakespearean metaphors, caused this modest glory to pale and extinguished its beams with its own dazzling splendour.

Paul de Kock, to his credit be it said, was a true *bourgeois*, a Philistine of the Marais, utterly devoid of feeling for poetry or style. He had never been a student, and had not the faintest idea of æsthetics; indeed, he would readily have supposed, like Pradon, that they were some chemical substance. He was wholly devoid of the artistic temperament, — I do not say this with any ironical intention; I mean that he possessed the *qualities* which are necessary to a man who is to become popular with the masses. Paul de Kock had the advantage of being absolutely like his readers. He shared their ideas, their opinions, their prejudices, their feelings. He possessed, however, a special gift, that of exciting laughter; not the Attic laughter, but the loud, coarse laugh, absurdly irresistible, which makes, as the saying is, people split their sides. Paul de Kock called out that laugh by comic situations in doubtful taste, ridiculous, unexpected happenings, grotesque amusements, the breaking of crockery, the splashing of gravy, by kicks and boxes on the ear which always went to the wrong person, and other unfailing clownish tricks. It is true that his work is coarsely done, lacks wit, and is heavy in its outlines; but his fanciful characters, which tumble one

over another like cardboard figures, possess a force and truthfulness and a touch of nature which must be acknowledged.

Now Paul de Kock has become an historical author. His works contain the description of manners in a civilisation differing as greatly from our own as does that the traces of which are found in Pompeii; his novels, which people read formerly for amusement's sake, will henceforth be consulted by erudites desirous of recreating life in that old Paris which I knew in my youth and of which the vestiges will soon have vanished.

Those who were born after the Revolution of February 24, 1848, or shortly before that date, cannot understand the Paris in which the heroes and heroines of Paul de Kock moved, lived, and had their being. It was so utterly unlike the present Paris that sometimes I ask myself, as I gaze upon the broad streets, the long boulevards, the vast squares, the endless lines of monumental houses, the splendid quarters which have been built upon old market-gardens, if that is indeed the city in which my childhood was passed.

Paris, which is becoming the metropolis of the world, was then only the capital of France. Frenchmen, and even Parisians, were to be met on its streets.

Of course, foreigners came to it, as they have always done, for pleasure or instruction, but means of communication were difficult, the ideal of rapidity did not go beyond the classical stage-coach, and the locomotive steam-engine was not even visible as a chimera within the mists of the future; so that the general appearance of the population was not markedly modified.

The inhabitants of the provinces remained at home much more than they do now, they troubled Paris only when called to it by urgent business. You could hear French spoken on the Boulevard, which was then called Boulevard de Gand, and which now bears the name of Boulevard des Italiens. You could meet frequently with a type which is now becoming rare, and which for us is the true Parisian type: fair skin, rosy cheeks, brown hair, light-gray eyes, short stature, but a good figure, and in women a delicate plumpness and small bones. Olive complexions and black hair were rare at that time; the South had not yet invaded Paris, bringing with it its complexion of passionate paleness, its brilliant eyes, and its mad gesticulations. The general appearance of faces then was rosy and smiling, with a look of health and good-humour; the complexions which nowadays are con-

sidered distinguished would at that time have suggested illness.

The city was, relatively speaking, very small, — that is, business was restricted within certain limits beyond which people rarely went. The plaster elephant, in which Gavroche used to take refuge, then rose gigantic behind the Place de la Bastille, and seemed to forbid people to walk farther. The Champs-Élysées became, as soon as night fell, as dangerous as the plain of Marathon; the boldest would stop at the Place de la Concorde. The quarter of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette then consisted merely of waste ground and fenced-in spaces. The church itself was not built, and from the Boulevard could be seen the Hill of Montmartre, with its wind-mills and the long arms of the semaphore on the top of the old tower. The Faubourg Saint-Germain went to bed early, and only on rare occasions did a student riot, provoked by a play at the Odéon, disturb its tranquil solitude. Trips from one quarter to another were less frequent. Omnibuses were not in existence, and there were marked differences in aspect, dress, and accent between the inhabitants of the Rue du Temple and those of the Rue Montmartre. The sewer in the Vieille Rue du Tem-

ple was only half covered in; the walls of the boulevard remained along almost its entire length, with streets lower down leading out on the site of the old moats. Great woodyards, the piles of lumber in which formed symmetrical designs, lay at the end of the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, and farther away, through the blue haze in the distance, showed the hill of Ménilmontant. At this point in the Boulevard rose the restaurant of la Galiotte, which was the scene of so many a joyous meal and so many a pleasant party. Farther on, at the corner of the Rue Charlot and close to the Turkish Garden, was the Cadran Bleu, dear to Paul de Kock and famous for its beautiful oyster-woman in her red drugget dress, her great pearl oyster-shells in her ears, and her innumerable necklaces. For those were the days of beautiful oyster-women, of pretty lemonade vendors, of beautiful *charcutières*. The Turkish Garden, with its Moorish arch, its ostrich-eggs, and its coloured windows, gave the impression of the most splendid Oriental magnificence, and people entered it with a sort of respectful awe, as if they expected to see His Highness face to face. On the opposite side of the Boulevard rose the theatres in which dramas and pan-

tomimes were performed, the Café de l'Épi-Scié, the sign of which represented a harvester sawing an ear of corn, and the mechanical show by M. Pierre, where we first learned something of the navy.

Over all that Boulevard, Paul de Kock reigns as a master. He knows all the *bourgeois* who pass by, as well as their wives and their daughters; he knows what they are thinking of, and the traditional jokes which they will perpetrate this evening while playing at loto; but it does not make him indignant; he enjoys them, he laughs at them heartily. Their courageous stupidity is pleasant to him. If these good people arrange to go picnicking next Sunday, he will take care to be invited, and will bring as his contribution a pasty or a melon. While eating dinner on the grass, no one will talk more nonsense than he, and no one at dessert will sing a more risky song. It is a coarse sort of enjoyment, no doubt, due to poor wine and ham, but honest, after all, for the whole family is there, and the girls who are kissed, and whose gingham dresses, made by themselves, are somewhat rumpled, know very well that their lovers will ere long become their husbands.

At that time, there were to be found all around Paris, numberless pastoral places, — at least, which appeared

pastoral to poor devils who had worked all the week in the darkness of a shop; little groves of trees, admirably fitted to shade a tavern, fishers' huts laved by the stream, in which a stew of small fry passed muster as gudgeon; arbours of Virginia creeper and hops, which at need served an amourous couple, as the cave served Æneas and Dido; Romainville, the Park of Saint-Fargeau, the Prés-Saint-Gervais, with their clumps of lilac and their fountain, the water of which filled up a small stone basin which was reached by a few steps. This sort of landscape was sufficient for Paul de Kock, who, as a matter of fact, is neither a picturesque writer nor a writer of descriptions after the fashion of the day. He thought it charming just as it was, and the wretched sward, diapered with greasy paper more than with daisies, represented the country to him; he sketched it in passing as a sort of background to his figures; but at bottom he did not understand much of what is now called nature, and in this respect he was truly French and truly Parisian.

But he did not always confine his walks to the suburbs, he sometimes went as far as Montmorenci, and then what splendid rides on asses' back through the forest; what shouts, what laughter, and what lucky

tumbles on the sward! And what delightful meals of brown bread and cherries! True, the participants were only clerks and shopgirls, but they were surely just as good as the modern dandies and fast women, even if one does not care to praise past times at the expense of the present, — a defect of those who were young under the former king. Unquestionably the *grisettes* of Paul de Kock are not as elegant as Alfred de Musset's "Mimi Pinson," but they are blooming, bright, jolly, kind-hearted girls, and as pretty, with their percale caps or their light straw hats, as the faces covered with rouge and powder for the sake of which well-bred young men ruin themselves nowadays. They earned their own scanty living, careless as the birds which perch upon the gutters of the roofs, but their love was not for sale and their hearts had first to be won. That charming race of girls has vanished, with many other good things of old Paris, which now survive only in the novels of old Paul de Kock, whose name will live long after that of some celebrities of the time, for he represents faithfully and with much spirit a wholly vanished epoch. How disdainful is the astonishment with which people now look upon his fast-living men who spent ten thousand a year, had a

cabriolet, — in those days there were cabriolets, — drank champagne in mad orgies, and kept a ballet dancer of the Gaîté or the Ambigu-Comique; and how contemptuously, no doubt, people now look upon those stag luncheons consisting of a couple of dozen oysters, radishes, and fresh-pork cutlets surrounded with green slices of cucumber, which the butchers formerly sold ready prepared, with, for wine, a bottle or two of Chablis; and yet people enjoyed them. But we have become more refined nowadays, and such pleasures are no longer sufficient for the present generation. In order to amuse itself, it has to pay, and to pay very dear. It is quite welcome to that. The former somewhat gross, but very natural joy appears to people nowadays bad form. They prefer jokes in slang borrowed from the dictionaries, and the epileptic insanities of the libretto of the Bouffes.

I the more willingly pay this late tribute to Paul de Kock that, when formerly bearing a pennant in the Romanticist army, I did not perhaps read his novels with the attention they deserved. Besides, the things he depicted were then present to us and their meaning did not stand out clearly. Nevertheless, I felt there was in him a sort of comic power which others lacked.

Now he appears to me in a more serious light, I will even say a melancholy light, if such a word is applicable to Paul de Kock. Some of his novels have the same effect upon me as Fenimore Cooper's "Last of the Mohicans"; I seem to read in them the story of the last of the Parisians, invaded and submerged by American civilisation.

JULES DE GONCOURT

BORN IN 1830 — DIED IN 1870

SO it is divided at last, — that double personality which was familiarly called the Goncourts, for no one ever separated one brother from the other. Those who knew intimately these two charming souls united in a single pearl, like two drops of water that have run together, were haunted by a disquieting, ever recurring, terrifying thought. It was: "Of those two brothers one will die first; the natural course of events makes it certain, unless a happy, blessed catastrophe strikes them down together at one and the same time." But heaven does not often bestow such blessings. The thought gnawed at my heart, and I scarce dared to dwell on the dread despair which would be the consequence of such a separation. The little bit of selfishness which is always to be found even in the most disinterested of human friendships made me repeat to myself, "I shall never see that day. As I am older, I shall have been dead for many a

year." But it was not to be so. That day, as the funeral hymn says, has come; I was there, and never did a sadder sight strike my eyes. Edmond, in his tragic grief, seemed like a petrified spectre, and death, which usually sets a mark of serene beauty on the face which it touches, had been unable to efface from the features of Jules, even and regular though they were, an expression of bitter grief and of inconsolable regret. It seemed as though he had felt at the last moment that he had no right to die like any one else, and that in doing so he was almost committing fratricide. The dead in his bier mourned for the living, unquestionably the more to be pitied of the pair.

I followed at every station of the *via crucis* poor Edmond, who, blinded by tears and supported by his friends, stumbled at every step as if his feet caught in his brother's shroud. Like people condemned to death, whose face is strangely altered on the way from the prison to the scaffold, Edmond, between Auteuil and the cemetery at Montmartre, had grown twenty years older, his hair had plainly turned white. This is no illusion of mine, several of those present noticed it turning whiter and losing its colour the nearer we approached the fatal spot and the little low door where

the last farewell must be spoken. It was lamentable and sinister, and never was a funeral procession so desolate; every one wept or sobbed convulsively; and yet those who walked behind that bier were philosophers, artists, writers, tried in grief, lords of their souls, masters of their nerves, and ashamed to betray emotion.

The coffin having been lowered into the narrow family vault where but one place is left, and the last farewell addressed to the friend who was starting on his first march towards that bourne whence no traveller returns, one of the relatives led Edmond away and we returned to the city in small groups, talking of the dead and of the survivor. Then we parted with a pressure of the hand, the firmer that it was inspired by the thought that it was perhaps the last one.

And now I must speak of the writer, though I have scarcely strength to do so. That worn face of the brother, which seemed lighted by a light from the other world, and looked, under the brilliant sunshine, like moonlight in broad day, rises before me like a real phantom, and I cannot put it aside. Since their mother's death, which happened in 1848, they had never been apart for an hour, and they had so thoroughly got into the habit of this common life that it

was a great event to see one of the Goncourts alone; the other was certainly not very far off.

Yet they were not twins. There was an interval of ten years between Edmond and Jules. The elder was dark, the younger fair, the elder taller than the other; their faces even were not alike; but one felt that a single soul dwelt in these two bodies; they were one person in two volumes. The moral likeness was so great that it made one forget physical unlikeness. How often I have mistaken Jules for Edmond, and continued with the one brother a conversation I had begun with the other! There was nothing to warn you that the person you were speaking to was different. Whichever of the two brothers happened to be there took up, without the least hesitation, the talk at the point where the other had left it. They had sacrificed their personality to each other and formed but a single one, which was called "the Goncourts" by friends, and "the Messieurs Goncourt" by those who did not know them. All their letters were signed "Edmond and Jules." During the ten years that I was intimately acquainted with them, I have received but a single note which was not signed by this sweet firm-name; — it is the one in which the unhappy survivor

told me, from the depths of his despair, of the death of his beloved brother. How much that widowed signature, testifying to his eternal loss, must have cost his trembling hand!

Although it is very difficult to believe it of literary men, yet nevertheless it is true that they had but one self-love. They never betrayed the secret of their partnership in labour; neither of them tried to obtain the glory for himself, and that single work produced by two brains still remains a mystery which no one has penetrated. I myself, their friend, who am trying here under these sad circumstances to say what was the dead man's share, — cannot do it; and besides, it seems to me almost impious to endeavour to separate what these two souls, one of which has now flown away, wished to unite indissolubly. Why should we untie this well plaited tress, the many-coloured threads of which are tressed in and out at regular intervals without knowing whence they came? I should fear to wound the brotherly delicacy which desired but a single reputation for the work done by the pair in common.

As I have already said, Jules de Goncourt was the younger of the two brothers. He was scarcely thirty-

four, and he appeared younger still, thanks to his fair complexion, to his silky, golden hair, and the light, pale, golden moustache which showed on the corners of his richly coloured lips. He was always carefully shaved and correctly dressed like a gentleman. Energetic black eyes marked his fine, sweet face. Generally he was brighter and gayer than his brother; the one was the smile of the other, but you had to know both very well to notice this slight difference. They never took each other's arm when walking; the younger preceded his brother by a few steps with a sort of juvenile petulance to which the elder gently yielded. Edmond had been the literary initiator of Jules, but all difference of style between himself and his pupil had long since disappeared. They thought and worked together, according to a plan which was no doubt settled beforehand, handing to each other across the table what they had written and summing it up in a final version. They were curious, refined men, with a horror of the commonplace and of ready-made phrases. To avoid the common they would have gone to excess, even to paroxysm, even to the length of making their expressions burst like soap bubbles over-filled with air. But then, how carefully they polished their style!

How exquisitely refined it was! what a delicate and novel choice of words! When they wrote history, they were not satisfied with the documents which were to be easily found, printed in books; they referred to original documents, to autographs, to unknown pamphlets, to secret memoirs, to paintings, engravings, fashion plates, to whatever might reveal a characteristic detail and revive the appearance of the times. Yet they were not novelists eager to load their palette with local colour. These two fashionable Benedictines worked in their dainty apartments of the rue Saint-George, filled with pretty bric-à-brac of the eighteenth century, as seriously as if they had been shut up within a monastery. They were scrupulously accurate. Every peculiarity which they mention is backed up by authentic proof. The masters of history and criticism, Michelet and Sainte-Beuve, quote them as authorities on everything that concerned the reign of Louis XVI, the Revolution, and the Directory, which they know thoroughly and every detail of which they are acquainted with. In the novel they attempted to reproduce, with implacable minuteness and clear-sightedness, reality, which they stretched out upon their table like an anatomical subject, with a pen as sharp as a dis-

secting-knife. It suffices to name "Sister Philomène," "Germinie Lacerteux," "Manette Salomon," "Renée Mauperin," in which occurs that new and living type of the noisy young girl, and their last work, "Madam Gervaisais," in which the study of a soul slowly absorbed by Catholicism is mingled with magnificent descriptions of Rome, wrought out like the etchings of Piranesi. With audacious originality they also tried their hand at drama. "Henriette Maréchal" failed to please Master Briar-pipe, the student in his twentieth year, which is a pity, for that undeserved check turned away from the stage two vocations which gave good promise. Besides these works the Goncourts produced interesting studies on Watteau, Chardin, Fragonard, Saint-Aubin, Gravelot, Eisen, and all the lesser masters of the eighteenth century, whom they knew so well, accompanied by plates which Jules engraved in *aqua fortis*. It is impossible to reproduce better the character of the art of an epoch unjustly disdained. They understood equally well the art of Japan, so true and so fanciful, so fertile in its invention of monstrosities, so astonishingly natural, and they wrote upon it with exquisite fancy. Let me not forget a book called "Ideas and Sensations," which gives the lyric and

dreamy side of their talent, and which takes the place, in their work, of the volume of verse which they did not write. It abounds in charming bits, it is full of wit, it is deep at times, and has descriptive passages of the greatest novelty. Did I not fear that my meaning would be misinterpreted, I would say that it contains exquisite symphonies of words. Words! Joubert estimates them at their real value, and compares them to precious stones which are set within the verse like diamonds in gold. They have their own beauty, known to poets and delicate artists alone.

When an author is spoken of, the titles of his books come up in a mass and take up all the room. But what did Jules die of? I shall be asked. He died of his profession, as we shall all die; he died of perpetual tension of the mind, of effort without rest, of struggle with difficulties created at will; of the fatigue of rolling that rock called the phrase, which is heavier than that of Sisyphus. To anæmia add nervousness, that wholly modern malady which comes from the overexcitement of civilised life, and which medicine is powerless to relieve, for it cannot reach the soul. You become irritable, the least noise worries you; you seek, but too late, silent repose in the shady woods; you fit

up a house. "The house finished, death enters," as the Turkish proverb says. Is that all? No, perhaps there was behind all this some secret grief. Jules de Goncourt, appreciated, praised, lauded by the masters of the intellect, lacked — what? The praise of fools. The vulgar is despised and kept at a distance, but if it accepts the sentence and stays away, the proudest natures grieve and pine away.

JULES JANIN

HE has been but recently admitted to the Academy; by rights, he should have been elected to it twenty years ago.

The man who since 1830 has every week put his initials, "J. J.," in the corner of the *Journal des Débats* owes to the *feuilleton* the best part of his glory, and for the first time a *feuilleton* writer sits down in the Academic arm-chair. Who is amazed and delighted at such an honour? It is J. J. For he is modest, and the little green embroidery upon his coat fulfils all his desires, — *hoc erat in votis*, shall I say, in one of those Latin quotations which he is so fond of? It is the legitimate and touching ambition of a writer to whom literature has always been an end, and not a means of reaching something else. He has fully deserved the palm branches on his sleeves and his collar; he was kept waiting for them too long, but at last he has them and we congratulate him upon the fact. When a man is neither a prince nor a duke, a

bishop nor a monk, a minister, a great lawyer, or a politician, not even a man of the world, but simply a literary man, it is as difficult for him to enter the French Academy as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

At last the *feuilleton* writer is installed under the cupola of the Mazarin palace. For my part, I am glad of it, for it is a victory and a triumph of which the Monday brethren have a right to be proud. "It is not every one who can paint like Boucher," used to say David, that severe painter, on hearing that facile artist run down by impotent disdain. Writing *feuilletons* is not much, — that is easily said, and thereupon the speaker shakes his head with a lofty air. But I should like to see attempt it — not for life, *di talem avertite casum!* five years would be enough — the grave, the serious, the difficult, the sober, the solemn, the learned, all the makers of compact weariness, the ornaments of reviews which one would rather admire than read; the fruitless ones who glory in their sterility and call their retention of style merit.

Of course it is easy to write a dramatic article, to improvise every week four or five hundred lines upon the most diverse and unexpected subjects; and brilliant

lines full of images, with endless wit scattered through them, such as a critic advised a gentleman to put into his somewhat weak fifth act; lines rapid in their correction and sure in their impetuous flow, full of those happy hits which are not to be found again by looking for them, by turns ironical and enthusiastic, mingling with the thought of others the fancy of the individual writer! To do this sort of work well, a man must be possessed. And therefore in this age, which abounds in poets, historians, novelists, and dramatists, great writers of articles are much rarer. I can count up as many as three.

Now that sort of article was invented by Janin. Before him Geoffroy, Hoffmann, Duviquet, Becquet, who were clever, erudite men no doubt, wrote dramatic notices in which the good and the bad features of a play were carefully noted and which resembled corrected themes. These comments were written in a cold, colourless, clear style, as transparent as filtered water in a crystal carafe, which the French naturally prefer to the rich, blazing, varied colours of gems and stained glass. A young fellow with curly black hair, plump, rosy cheeks, red lips, bright smile, came to Paris from the Provinces and changed all that

with his intoxicating ardour, his joyous audacity, his high spirits which showed on the least pretext in bright smiles and sonorous laughter, his ever ready facility, his inexhaustible abundance, and a really new way of writing in which every word was equivalent to his signature.

Thus did he appear, healthy, happy, among the yallery-greenery, elegiacal, Byronic chorus of the Romanticists, — an original and jolly face, genuinely French. No doubt he was a Romanticist, like all the youth of that day, but in his own way, without belonging to any set, with a shade of undisciplined irony which questions while it admires. He may have preferred Diderot to Shakespeare, and he may have read more willingly "Rameau's Nephew" than "As You Like It," or "The Tempest," or "A Midsummer Night's Dream." He was satisfied with the eighteenth century, while we went back to the sixteenth, kneeling before Ronsard and the poets of the Pleiad. The love of Latin, already so greatly developed in him, seems to have preserved him from the enthusiasm excited by exotic literatures. He bowed as he passed the foreign gods, whom he perhaps considered somewhat barbaric, as the Athenians did what-

ever was not Greek; but his devotion to the imported altars was never very fervent.

Like most of us at that precocious time of early maturity, he possessed his talent forthwith and his first attempts were master-strokes. Now that we are accustomed to that perpetual wonder, it is impossible to imagine the effect produced at that time by his thoroughly new, youthful, dainty style, charming in its harmony, incomparable in its freshness of tone, with the velvet bloom of a pastel, set off by a small patch, with its swarm of light-winged phrases fluttering here and there as if at haphazard under their gauze drapery, but always finding their way and bringing back flowers which of themselves formed a dazzling bouquet studded with diamonds of dew and shedding the sweetest perfumes.

"Where is he going to?" people asked with the uneasiness so speedily dispelled, called out by cleverly performed feats of strength, when at the beginning of an article he started from a melodrama or a vaudeville in pursuit of a paradox, a fancy, or a dream, interrupting himself to relate an anecdote, to run after a butterfly, leaving his subject and returning to it, opening in a parenthesis an outlook upon a smiling landscape or a

glimpse of bluish lane ending in a jet of water or a statue, enjoying himself like a street boy who sets off crackers between the reader's legs, and laughing heartily at the involuntary jump caused by the explosion. But as he goes strolling along in this way he meets at the corner of a path the idea, which was wandering along, he looks at it, finds it fair, noble, chaste, he falls in love with it in a second, gets excited, warm, eloquent, and passionate; he becomes serious, eloquent, and convinced; he defends with lyrical, honest indignation, beauty, goodness, truth, that moral trinity, which counts to-day nearly as many unbelievers as the theological Trinity. He is a sage, a philosopher, almost a preacher. And the forgotten play? He remembers it somewhat late, when he finds that he has got to the end of the tenth column of his article and that presently the portico will be completed; so in a few sharp, quick, telling words he gives the subject of the drama or the comedy, he states its defects and its qualities, approves or disapproves its tendencies with that common-sense of his which is scarcely ever mistaken, in his feeling for the stage transformed by years into infallible experience. He has even had time to review the actors, to flatter or scold them, or at least

to call them by their names like a general who rides down the line of battle. So "the prince of the critics" was at that time and is still a current expression understood by every one as meaning Jules Janin, just as "our most fertile novelist" means Balzac.

You will readily believe that a style with so characteristic a swing, so peculiar a savour, so marked a manner, was frequently imitated — but no one imitated it so well as Janin himself.

I have dwelt on the new academician's talent as a writer of newspaper articles; it is that side of him which the public knows most of and that in which he shows himself oftenest at that Monday balcony whence the writer bows to his readers; but J. J. (who now becomes Jules Janin in full and will hereafter add the regulation words "of the French Academy") has written quite a number of very good books: "The Dead Ass and the Beheaded Wife," — one of those youthful sins which a man ought not to disavow later under pretext of wisdom and taste, for it is these which make you known and make you famous; "Barnave," in which there are so many splendid passages; "The Pedestal," a bold subject brilliantly carried out; "Clarissa Harlowe," drawn from her dull setting and

restored with pious care; "The End of a World," which is the continuation and the conclusion of "Rameau's Nephew"; "The Nun of Toulouse," and many other books well written and well printed, worthy in every respect to be placed in the Passy chalet on the shelves of the select library by the side of the *princeps* editions of the great authors splendidly bound by Bauzonnet, Capet, Petit, and the other masters of the art, the pride and happiness of the scholar who lives in the midst of these riches, which he is not satisfied with looking at, but which he reads, studies, and the very marrow of which he assimilates.

That is readily seen in his style.

Janin's speech on the great writer (Sainte-Beuve) whose place he took in the Academy has been published by the papers, and the dramatic critic did full justice to the critic of books. He told us of his marvellous success, of his depth of intuition, of his subtlety, of his patience as an investigator, of his gift of understanding everything, feeling everything, of entering into the most opposite natures, living their life, thinking their thoughts, descending into their most secret parts, a golden lamp in his hand, and of passing like the Hindoo gods through a perpetual

series of incarnations and avatars. He suitably lauded that curiosity constantly awake, never satisfied, which thought it knew nothing if it had allowed the least detail to escape. *Homo duplex*, man is double, said the philosopher. As far as Sainte-Beuve is concerned, he is even triple, and desiring to complete the portrait which all believed to be finished, he asked for new sittings from the model, sought more information, ferreted out, found out, and only passed to another when the resemblance of the picture placed upon the easel left nothing more to be desired.

Certainly, if anything from this world reaches the other, Sainte-Beuve must have been happy at hearing himself praised thus. Perhaps he may have thought that because the critic was so highly lauded, the poet was somewhat too lightly spoken of. That was his only and secret self-love; — Sainte-Beuve almost regretted that his second reputation, so vast, so deserved, so universally accepted, should have masked, as it were, or eclipsed the first. "The poet, who died young while the man survived," still existed for him, ever young and living, and he loved people to allude to him and to ask for him; it was with real pleasure that he recited to his intimate friends, without much press-

ing, some fragments of a mysterious elegy, some languorous love sonnet, which had not found a place in one of his three volumes of verse. A word or two about "Joseph Delorme," or "Consolations," and especially "Thoughts in August" caused him greater joy than manifold praise of his last "Causerie du lundi"; for he had indeed been an inventor in poetry, he had struck a new and wholly modern note, and of all his set he was assuredly the most romantic. In the humble poetry, which by the sincerity of feeling and the minuteness of detail copied from nature recalls the verse of Crabbe, Wordsworth and Cowper, Sainte-Beuve traced out for himself little footpaths half-way up the hill, bordered with common little flowers, where no one in France had passed before him. His composition is somewhat laborious and complex, owing to the difficulty he experienced in reducing to metrical form ideas and images yet unexpressed or hitherto disdained. But how many admirable, inspired passages, in which no effort is felt! What intense, subtle charm! What an intimate penetration of the weariness of the soul! What a divination of unconfessed desires and obscure supplications! Sainte-Beuve as a poet would easily form the subject of a long and interesting study.

TONY JOHANNOT

BORN IN 1803 — DIED IN 1852

ALTHOUGH Tony Johannot was a newspaper man through his illustrations, he did not attract, as he deserved to do, the attention of contemporary critics, because newspapers talk about everything except newspaper men. Tony Johannot sketched his articles in pencil; that was the only difference.

The admiration felt in France for soporific talents is the reason why until now justice has not been done to him. As people glance at one of his numberless drawings, they remark, "It is very pretty," and pass on. If he had painted some huge daub full of wooden figures on cardboard horses, he might have been elected to the Institute and would have enjoyed the consideration which takes the shape of crosses, of offices and dignities. Nothing is so hurtful to a man as grace, wit, and facility. The average individual who sees a clever man produce rapidly a pretty thing, thinks he

has been done out of his money; so clever men shut themselves up in their den, even if they simply intend to go to sleep, put a lighted lamp near the window, and affirm that they have spent three months in producing a work which they really dashed off in three days. Tony Johannot had to bear the consequences of having published in the course of fifteen years, without making any fuss and merely when asked by publishers, a vast number of delightful sketches which, though they were dashed off, were none the less finished work and which many painters of great pretensions would have found it difficult to equal. This enormous quantity of work, scattered in more than a thousand volumes, can sustain comparison with the works of Cochin, Gravelot, Eisen, Moreau, Saint-Non, and the cleverest sketchers of previous centuries.

At all times books have been more or less richly illustrated. The illuminators and miniaturists of the Middle Ages covered the margins of missals and romances of chivalry with marvellous arabesques in which fantastic birds mingled with ideal flowers in a maze of curves fit to drive the most patient copyist to despair. The capital letters formed frames for small episodical scenes, and in the most important places

were inserted vignettes in which ultramarine and gold rival each other in brilliancy and beauty. Printing was the death of caligraphy, engraving suppressed the illuminator and miniaturist, but the custom of illustrating valuable books and of translating a page into a drawing remained.

This kind of work, in which the pencil intensifies the stroke of the pen, calls for a particular kind of talent. The artist must understand the poet, and be himself, so to speak, a literary man. It is not a question of transferring nature directly to the canvas, of copying reality as it is seen, — for in art there are innumerable forms of reality, — of seizing the play of light and shade, of reproducing the attitude of the head which you like, of the smile which charms you; that is the painter's business. The book illustrator — we may be allowed this neologism, which has almost ceased to be one — must see only with another's eyes. He loves dark women with arched eyebrows, blue-black hair, clean, Syracusan profiles; his author's heroine is a regular German moonbeam, showing silvery amid falling hair. He has never seen the luxurious vegetation of the tropics, the palms, the rose-apples, the frangipanes, though he knows thoroughly the hedges

of hawthorn, the brooks purling under the water cress, the hut hidden between the walnut trees — but it is "Paul and Virginia" which he has to illustrate; never mind, he will make a masterpiece of it.

Like the newspaper man, the illustrator must always be ready for anything. Which of us knows what he will write about to-morrow? In one and the same article, chance may take us from Russia to Egypt, from the hoariest antiquity to the most living actuality; every minute we have to overleap two thousand years or two thousand leagues; every period, every country, every style must be known. That is a difficulty which is not thought of and which is tremendous. To accept a subject or to choose it for yourself are two very different things. Much adaptability, much intelligence, much readiness of mind, much quickness of hand are needed for such difficult work. Tony Johannot is unquestionably the prince of illustrators. Some years ago no novel or poem could be published without a wood-cut signed with his name. How many slim-waisted, swan-necked, long-locked, small-footed heroines he has drawn on Japan paper! How many a ragged tramp, how many a knight armed cap-à-pie, how many a scaly, many-clawed monster he has scattered upon the

yellow covers of mediæval novels! He has handled all the verse and all the literature of ancient and modern times: the Bible, Molière, Cervantes, Walter Scott, Byron, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Goethe, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, — he has treated every one of them. His drawings appeared in these wondrous books and no one thought them out of place. By the side of these sublime pages, of these harmonious verses, they formed an ornament and not a blot. What so many different geniuses dreamed, he succeeded in rendering and transporting it into his own art. Assuredly that is a glory worth many another, to have put his name into all these books, the honour of humankind. Ary Scheffer, though he never made any vignettes, may be considered as the type of the literary artist, whose genius is excited by the art of a poem. What are "Marguerite Spinning," "Marguerite at Church," the two "Mignons," "Medora," "The Giaour," "The King of Thule," "Eberhard the Weeper," but splendid illustrations? If Scheffer had met the real Marguerite in the street, he would doubtless have been less struck with her than with Goethe's Marguerite whom he met in a scene in "Faust." Highly developed civilisation, the fusion of the various arts, the

habit of living among the creations of the mind, have the effect on certain peculiar minds of making them see nature at last only through the masterpieces of men.

No doubt thorough-bred painters, who need but a contour to excite them and who discover a painting in an attitude, in the fall of a fold, are to be preferred; but there is to me a wondrous charm in these delicate flowers which have bloomed in the hot-house of another art. Their tints are of a lovely pallor, they have soft shades penetrated, as it were, by a mysterious light; under the colours of the painter, you hear the murmur of the poet's strophes. These hybrid creations have a peculiar attraction for refined minds.

What Ary Scheffer realised in a sphere serene and apart, Tony Johannot accomplished within the conditions of modern industry which constantly — and that is the greatest praise which can be given it — has need of the arts; and he did it amid all the tumult and all the chances of publication. He despised nothing, not even the heading of a page, an ornamental letter, or a poster; he lent his swift, clever pencil, his compositions, ever intelligent and fine, to all men, poets, historians, novelists, or writers of picturesque works.

One needs to know, as I do, how little is left of a

drawing engraved on wood, then electrotyped and printed with thick ink, to admire Johannot as he deserves to be admired. The engraver merits, as much as the translator, the epithet *tradittore*.

Weary of seeing his delicate work made heavy by coarse or careless engravers, Tony Johannot ended in refusing to trust any one but himself. He remembered that he also had once handled the graver, and turning to account the publication of a beautiful work which a publisher of taste desired to bring out, he himself etched a series of exquisite illustrations for Goethe's "Werther," translated by Pierre Leroux and with a preface by George Sand.

Tony Johannot, the improvising artist, supplies with Gavarni the illustrations called for by Paris. Only, there is between Tony Johannot and Gavarni this difference, that the former does his best work in books, while Gavarni prefers to choose his own subject. Gavarni's types belong to him more completely, but he lacks Johannot's skill in translating the thought of others. Johannot is more of a poet, Gavarni more of a philosopher; the one understands and the other sees; but those two, such as they are, have no rivals in the art which they follow.

INGRES

BORN IN 1781 — DIED IN 1867

AN artist's life is in his work, especially nowadays when the development of civilisation has diminished the number of eventful lives and almost destroyed the chance of personal adventure. The biographies of most of the great masters of past ages contain a legend, a romance, or, at all events, a story. Those of the famous painters and sculptors of our day may be summed up in a few lines: struggle in obscurity, work in shadow, suffering bravely borne, a reputation denied at first, later acknowledged, recompensed more or less sufficiently, great orders, the cross of the Legion of Honour, election to the Institute. Aside from a few victims who fall before the hour of triumph and who are ever to be regretted, such is, save for a small number of special details, the usual substance of modern biographies. But if facts have small place in them, on the other hand, ideas and characters take up much room; the works make up for the incidents which are lacking.

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres was born at Montauban in 1781, so he is seventy-six to-day. Never was there a greener old age or one that weighed less upon the man, and we may safely venture to promise that the illustrious master will live as long as Titian and even longer.

There is a portrait of Ingres painted by himself, in 1804. He has represented himself standing in front of his easel with the end of his cloak thrown over his shoulder. In his right hand he holds a white pencil, his left rests on his breast; the head, in three quarters, faces you. The painter seems to be calling up his faith and his will before beginning his work. The features, in spite of their youth (the artist was then twenty-four), are strongly marked. The hair, of a deep black, is parted on the brow and curls freely and strongly; the brown eyes are of an almost wild brilliancy, the lips are a rich red, and the complexion, tanned by internal fires, recalls the amber, tawny tone which Giorgione was so fond of; the turned-down shirt-collar sets off by its broad white tint the warm flesh tones. The background is of that neutral tone with which studio walls are painted.

The portrait shows remarkable virility; it is full of

the vigorous life of youth, held in by the will. The master shows behind the student. Those who accuse Ingres of being cold have certainly not seen that quick, strong, determined face which seems to follow you with its dark, steady, deep glance. It is one of those troublesome portraits with which you can never be alone in the room where they hang, for a soul watches you through the dark eyes.

I am very fond of looking at the portraits of illustrious masters painted at the outset of their career, before glory has settled upon their dreamy brow. Such portraits are rare. It is not until men have grown older and become famous that people bethink themselves of multiplying their likeness.

The artist has fulfilled every promise held out by this particular portrait, — ardent faith, undaunted courage, invincible perseverance. In the clean lines, in the strongly marked flats, in the strong build of the man shows an obstinate genius which may even be called hard-headed. Has it not been said that genius is infinite patience? The motto of such a man seems to be, *Etiam si omnes ego non;* and in truth nothing, neither classical pedantry nor Romanticist riotousness, have succeeded in turning away from the worship of

pure beauty that enthusiastic artist, who was so long a solitary, who preferred to await reputation rather than acquire it hastily by conforming to popular ideas. At a time when men doubted, hesitated, idled, he proved to be a believer who never wavered for a second. Nature, Phidias, and Raphael were to him a sort of trinity of art, the Ideal of which was the unity. If a monk's cowl replaced the cloak, the painting would show a young Italian monk of the Middle Ages, one of those who became cardinals or popes; for they possessed the power of following out a single idea their life long.

Now let us look at the portrait of the great master full of years and honours, who reigned despotically over a school of enthusiastic followers, worshipped and feared like a god. The hair, which as yet shows but a slight touch of white, is still parted in the centre in honour of the divine Sanzio, a sort of mysterious token by which the devotee consecrates himself to his ideal. A few wrinkles have slightly furrowed the brow, a few veins show upon the broader temples; compact, solid flesh broadens the original form and marks strongly the outlines shown in the earlier portrait. The mouth is sadder-looking, with two or

three morose wrinkles at the corners, but the eye preserves its immortal youth and still gazes upon the same end, the Beautiful. Instead of the modern overcoat, place on that figure a Roman mantle, and the head, with its strong lines, and its vigorous colour modified, not destroyed by age, could figure among the Roman prelates assembled in conclave, or in a ceremony in the Sistine Chapel. If I insist upon this point, it is because the worship of art, of which he was the most fervent priest, imparted to Ingres a positively pontifical aspect. During his whole life he carried the sacred Ark and bore the tables of the Law.

The biographies of artists begin usually with a narration of the obstacles placed in the way of an undoubted vocation by the members of the family. The father, who wants his son to be a notary, a doctor, or a barrister, burns the poems, tears up the drawings, hides the brushes. In Ingres' case, wonderful to relate, there were no difficulties of this sort. The son's intentions agreed with the father's wishes; the child was given paper, red pencils, and a portfolio of engravings to copy; he also learned music on the violin. Painter or musician, whichever it might be, such a

career in no wise terrified his excellent father. The phenomenon is explained by the fact that the latter was himself a musician and a painter. Young Ingres was sent to the studio of M. Roque, of Toulouse, a pupil of Vien; but the thing which decided his fate was the sight of a copy of the "Madonna della Sedia" brought from Italy, rather than his master's teaching. The impression this picture made on him was ineffaceable; even now, when he is over sixty, it still rules his life.

A few years later he came to Paris and entered David's studio. He obtained at the competition a second prize, which exempted him from conscription. In 1801 he took the first prize for his painting, "Achilles receiving in his tent the deputies of Agamemnon," which is now to be seen at the Academy of Fine Arts, and which is already characteristic of him. Although a laureate, he did not at once leave for the Eternal City, which was to become his second country. The finances of the State were exhausted, and there were no funds to pay bursaries, so he waited for a more fortunate time, working and drawing from the antique and the model in the Museum and at Susse's studio, copying engravings

of the great masters, and preparing himself for coming glory, by hard, serious study.

At last he got to Rome, to the city in which before him another austere master, Poussin, had become so thoroughly naturalised that he almost forgot France amidst the masterpieces of antiquity. The artistic atmosphere, so favourable to quiet and thoughtful work, suited him admirably; he grew stronger in silence, in solitude, far from coteries and sets, and turned his studio into a sort of cloister which the rumour of the world never reached. He lived alone, proud and sad; but every day he could admire the *Loggie* and the *Stanze* of Raphael, and that consoled him for many things. Soon after, he married the woman who had been sent to him from France, and who, by providential good fortune, turned out to be exactly the one whom he would have chosen for himself. Every one knows with what tireless devotion Madame Ingres kept from her husband all those little troubles which wear and distract genius. She concealed from him the painful side of life, and created around him an atmosphere of calm and serenity, even when times were hardest. Sure of attaining his end sooner or later, although he saw his work disregarded

or little esteemed, Ingres persisted in following the path upon which he had started, and often want made itself felt within his household. Such poverty is glorious and may well be spoken of. At Florence the artist, whose work is now worth its weight in gold, was obliged to paint portraits for the meanest price in order to defray household expenses, and he did not even always have portraits to paint. Never did an artist carry farther contempt for money and easily acquired reputation.

He laboured a long time over his paintings, and knew how to await the moment of inspiration of works which were to last forever. The public is inclined to believe that the painter of the "Vow of Louis XIII," of the Homer ceiling and of the "Stratonice," is not a rapid worker. That is a mistake. The painter is so thoroughly trained and so sure of himself that he never puts on a touch of colour which does not tell, and often Ingres has painted in a single day a great figure from head to foot in which no one else than he could detect a defect. But an artist so conscientious and so strong is not easily satisfied; what is well is not sufficient, he wants the best, and only stops at the point where the imperfection of human means stops geniuses which are

most trained to pursue the ideal. So paintings which he began at the outset of his career have only recently been finished, but those who have been fortunate enough to see them do not think the artist took too long to complete them, although they have been some forty years on the easel.

"The Odalisque," for which Queen Caroline of Naples gave him a commission in 1813 and which was purchased by M. Pourtalès in 1816 for the ornament of his gallery — it now belongs to M. Goupil, who was determined that the masterpiece should not leave France — was the first picture which drew attention to the master, who was yet unknown in his own country. The effect it produced might have discouraged a man of less sturdy convictions. His exquisite perfection of drawing, his admirable and delicate modeling, the splendid taste which united the choicest of nature to the purest traditions of antiquity, were not then appreciated. "The Odalisque" was called Gothic, and the painter was accused of seeking to go back to the dawn of art. This strange judgment is no invention of mine. The barbarians whom his critics of 1817 said Ingres was supposed to be imitating were merely Andrea Mantegna, Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino,

Raphael, — people who, as of course every one knows, have long since been left behind by progress. Later on the Romanticists also were reproached with making the French language go back to Ronsard.

"The Vow of Louis XIII," on which Ingres worked for three years, at last compelled admiration. Never, indeed, since the days of the painter of Urbino had a nobler, a more splendid Madonna presented a more divine Child Jesus to the worship of angels and of men. The French artist had taken rank, by that masterpiece, among the great Italian masters of the sixteenth century. The angels drawing up the curtains, the children bearing tablets, the King's figure seen from the back and showing merely a slight profile above a great fleur-de-lised mantle, the folds of which spread out over the slabs of the pavement, were painted in a style and with a power the traditions of which had been lost for more than two centuries.

In 1824 Ingres received the cross of the Legion of Honour, and in 1825 he was elected to the Institute of France. The "Apotheosis of Homer," in the Salon of 1827, at which were exhibited also Eugène Devéria's "Birth of Henry IV," and Eugène Dela-

croix' "Sardanapalus," crowned the glory of the artist who had been so long misunderstood. He thus gained for himself in a serene region far above the squabbles of schools, a position apart, which he has kept ever since and which no one has attempted to take from him. He maintains himself in it with majestic tranquillity,—*pacem summa tenent*,—hearing only the vague rumours of the distant world and cultivating the beautiful without any distraction; a stranger to his time, but living with Phidias and Raphael that eternal life of art which is true life, since often but a poem, a statue, a painting remains of a whole vanished nation.

Curiously enough, this austere master was supported by the Romanticists, and he counted more enthusiastic partisans among the members of the new school than in the Academy. Although Ingres might, to a superficial observer, appear to be a classical painter, he is not in the least so; he goes back straight to primitive sources, to Greek antiquity, to the sixteenth century; no one more faithfully observes local colour than he does. His "Entry of Charles V into Paris" is like a Gothic tapestry; his "Francesca da Rimini" seems to have been taken from one of those precious illumin-

ated manuscripts which called for all the patience of artists; his "Roger and Angelica" possesses the chivalrous grace of Ariosto's poem; his "Sistine Chapel" might have been signed by Titian; while the subjects he has drawn from antiquity, such as "Œdipus," "The Apotheosis of Homer," the "Stratonice," "Venus Anadyomene," seem to be painted in exactly the way that Appelles would have painted them. His "Odalisques" would excite the Sultan's jealousy, so familiar does the artist appear to be with the secrets of the harem. Nor has any one rendered modern life better than he has, as witness the immortal portrait of M. Bertin de Vaux, which seems to be the physiology of a character and the history of a reign. If Ingres knows how to make the folds of Greek drapery fall admirably, he knows equally well how to turn modern dress to the best account, and how to drape a shawl, as is proved by his portraits of women.

Whatever may be the subject he takes up, Ingres treats it with the same rigorous accuracy, the same extreme fidelity to colour and form, and never yields to academic mannerism; for if in Cherubini's historical portrait he has introduced Polyhymnia stretching

out her hand over the artist's inspired brow, he has represented the old master in his wig and cloak; and in his treatment of subjects drawn from antiquity, Ingres acts exactly like a poet who, desiring to write a Greek tragedy, goes back to Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, instead of imitating Racine and his disciples. In this sense he is a Romanticist; hence it is not surprising that he gained many followers among the new school, although for the public in general any man who paints scenes from ancient history and mythology is a Classicist.

The "Martyrdom of Saint Symphorius," which would have been admired by Michael Angelo and Giulio Romano, was not fortunate enough to please the French public at the Exposition of 1834. The sublime head of the saint, the magnificent gesture of the mother, the superb attitudes of the lictors, were not enough to make the colour, with its mat, sober, strong likeness to the tone of the frescoes of the great masters, find favour in the eyes of the sight-seers. The artist, rightly indignant, withdrew, as Achilles under his tent, to Rome, where he became director of the French School, and he gave himself up to the teaching of his art with an authority which no other

professor could equal. His pupils adored and feared him, and every day there occurred in the school violent and extraordinary scenes, quarrels, and reconciliations. Ingres speaks of his art with singular eloquence. Phidias and Raphael excite in him effusions and lyrical outbursts which should be taken down in short-hand. On other occasions, when calmer, he enunciates maxims and advice which it is always well to follow, and which contain the whole æsthetics of painting compressed in an abrupt, concise, but clear way.

His influence has been very great and continues to be felt. Hippolyte Flandrin, Amaury Duval, Lehmann, Ziegler, Chassériau were his most remarkable pupils, but each one, it may be said, did honour to his master within the bounds of his own talent.

At the Universal Exposition of 1855, Ingres' works were exhibited in a separate room, a sort of special chapel of that great jubilee of painting to which the worshippers of the beautiful repaired from every country under the sun.

The limits of my article have not allowed me to write of the whole of the master's work; I preferred to consider the artist generally. In spite of some personal peculiarities, I admire his whole personality,

his harmonious life dedicated unreservedly to art, his persistent striving after the beautiful, which nothing has distracted. Men who are partisans of religious, political, or philosophical systems, will no doubt affirm that Ingres does not serve any idea. That is precisely wherein lies his superiority. Art is the end, and not a means for him, and never was there a higher end. Every poet, sculptor, or painter who uses his pen, chisel, or brush to serve any system whatever, may be more or less of a statesman, or of a philosopher, but I should greatly mistrust the value of his verse, of his statues, of his paintings. He has failed to understand that beauty is superior to any other conception. Did not Plato himself say that "Beauty is the splendour of truth?"

There is still another quality which could be joined to all the others which Ingres possessed: he preserved the secret, now lost, of reproducing feminine beauty. Look at the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," at "Angelica," "The Odalisque," the "Portrait of Mme. de Vauçay," which the great Leonardo da Vinci would willingly have signed; at "Cherubini's Muse," the "Venus Anadyomene," the "Stratonice," the figure of Victory in "The Apotheosis of Napoleon," and

finally "The Spring," a genuine Parian marble flushed with life, an incredible masterpiece, a marvel of grace and of bloom, a flower of Greek springtime which blossomed under the artist's brush at an age when the palette falls from the sturdiest hands.

PAUL DELAROCHE

BORN IN 1797 — DIED IN 1836

IN years gone by, I criticised Paul Delaroche rather harshly. It was in the days when controversies on art were fought out to the bitter end and with the sharpest weapons. Happy times they were! Who gets excited to-day for or against a poet, a painter, or a composer? The splendid wrath and the hot admiration of bygone years are known no more. I hated Paul Delaroche, whom I had never seen, with a savage and æsthetic hatred; I could have eaten him, and thought him good eating, as the young redskin thought the Bishop of Quebec. What was the cause of this deep aversion? Delaroche in painting, as Casimir Delavigne in literature, was hurting and turning out of its course, by prudent concessions, by timid boldness, by a sort of *bourgeois* Romanticism, the great movement directed by Victor Hugo and Eugène Delacroix. His paintings, composed like the endings of a tragedy and executed with

extreme finish, drew crowds. He indulged in a coquettish, polished, lustrous mediævalism, minutely accurate in trifles, which delighted the Philistines. On all hands I was asked, "What more do you want? He does not paint Greeks or Romans." But I had discovered the leg of Achilles in Cromwell's jack-boot, and the torso of Hyacinth under the surcoat of the Princes in the Tower, and thereat I did both yell and rage! I wish you could have seen me, with wild hair and all my claws showing, leaping about in my part of the newspaper like a caged wild beast. The fanatics of my school, the wan, the tanned, the greenery-yallery, the long-haired, the fiercely moustached, the heavily bearded, those who wore ruffles and jerkins, called out, "Well roared, lion."

Many years have since gone by. As I recall these things and smile at the sacred fury of my youth, I do not in any respect regret it. Pure thought inspired me, boundless love of art impelled me, and the danger which I pointed out was in no wise chimerical. I was wrong, no doubt, in the form of my attack, but at bottom I was right. My task was a noble one; I was pleading the cause of ignored genius against popular talent, and fanatical, like every believer, I tried to

shatter the idol of the crowd in order to erect upon its pedestal the statue of the true god.

Since then, while remaining true to my beliefs, I have come to recognise the ingenious mind, the patient study, and the unswerving perseverance of the artist; I have admired, as every one has, and more than any one has, that marvellous little masterpiece, "The Death of the Duke of Guise," an amazingly faithful historical painting, a photographic reproduction of a period made centuries later, a retrospective picture which might well be the work of an eye-witness.

Although Paul Delaroche enjoyed a reputation more than European, and which might, without exaggeration be called world-wide, it is not a paradox to affirm that he is little known. Among the members of the present generation, there are few who have seen paintings by him. Popular though he was, thanks to the splendid engravings published by Goupil, who had for him a sort of worship, he avoided the noisy arena of the Salon; he even kept away from the great Exposition of 1855, to which French and foreign masters sent their finest paintings.

The exhibition of his works in the Palace of the Fine Arts, was almost a complete novelty to most of

the visitors, to whom the recent works of the painter are assuredly unknown, even supposing they have seen and recall his former ones.

I approve of these solemn exhibitions, in which the dead artist, before he passes definitely to posterity, shows frankly and simply his work from his earliest lisp in art to his final word. So what I have to do now is to pass a serious judgment which shall conciliate the respect due to an illustrious memory with the severity obligatory in matters affecting the present and the future of art. I am far from desiring to diminish the reputation of one of the glories of France, and yet it is well not to yield to an easily understood admiration, and in the name of high art to make some reservations, to state some objections against tendencies which ought not to be encouraged.

Paul Delaroche was not born a painter. He did not possess the gift, as did the masters of the sixteenth century, to say nothing of some of our own contemporaries; art is not in him a native flower which blooms spontaneously in the springtime of life, and crowns the brow of Raphael; Delaroche did not produce, when quite young and almost unconsciously, masterpieces which he found it difficult to surpass in mature age,

even if he managed to equal them. He had not the innate feeling for form, still less the feeling for colour, or that imperious temperament of the painter, which betrays itself in the first daubs of the child. But he possessed in a high degree intelligence and will; he bent all the persistent qualities of his mind to the attainment of a determinate end; he worked, he corrected, he improved, and he stopped only at his extreme limits, starting again when rested and stronger, after a halt for meditation. Never was the oft quoted Latin proverb, *Labor improbus omnia vincit*, more fittingly applicable; but notwithstanding the proverb, it is not true that determined work will accomplish everything; grace, in the Christian sense, is also needed; works alone will not save a man.

Differing in this from born painters, to whom the subject of a composition is almost always indifferent, and who make hundreds of masterpieces out of two or three insignificant subjects, Paul Delaroche was always very much concerned with it. In this respect it may be said that he belonged to the middle classes. He tried to be interesting, which is a matter absolutely secondary in art. If a visitor in a gallery of paintings stops before a picture, and instead of looking at it and

enjoying it, first turns over his catalogue to find out what is the historical scene or anecdote represented, you may affirm of him, without fear of being mistaken, that unquestionably the man does not love painting.

Delaroche has far too many such visitors. Cleanness of outline, power or delicacy in modelling, harmony in colour, the imitation of nature idealised through style, are far more important than curiosity or the selection of a subject. There is the true, the only, the unchanging subject of painting. Of late the literary idea has been confounded with the picturesque idea, yet no two things can be more dissimilar. If I were to say that a picture of still life by Chardon, which represents a ray fish, a bunch of celery, a stewpan, or an earthenware jar even, has the picturesque idea which is lacking in vast cyclical, genetical, philosophical, historical, ethnographical, and prophetical compositions, I should probably surprise many society people, but certainly, I should not surprise artists, who are perfectly well aware of that truth. In France the feeling for plasticity scarcely exists; beauty in itself does not interest us. The multitude, cold and inattentive, passes by a Greek torso, headless, armless, legless, a divine fragment which sings the hymn of pure beauty

in its mute marble language, and crowds in front of a painting which needs a page of explanations in small type in the Salon catalogue. Delaroche's success with this portion of the public was therefore immense every time he allowed them to see his pictures. He introduced the drama into painting. Every one of his works is like the fifth act of a melodrama or of a tragedy, and at the bottom of them might be written, as a last direction, "Curtain."

Our people prefer a dramatic form, for it suits our simple, accurate, positive minds. Paul Delaroche was very French in this respect; he himself possessed the taste which he so thoroughly served. At bottom Ingres' drawing is as unpleasant to the general public as Delacroix' colour, for two different reasons. These two masters cultivated pure art; that is, for the one, line is the most important thing, as tone is for the other. They do not delight that numerous class which reads a picture as it would one of Walter Scott's novels.

It is strange to affirm of a man who attained every possible honour in his art, that he mistook his vocation when he chose painting, which brought him so much renown; but after having paid three visits to the exhibition in the Palace of the Fine Arts, I cannot help

feeling that Paul Delaroche would have succeeded much better on the stage; it was in that direction that his real talent lay, for he possessed remarkable skill in stage-setting and wonderful knowledge of dramatic grouping, and even — to be quite frank — of the way to light up the dead and the beheaded.

One very striking fact, brought out most significantly by the exposition in the Palace of Fine Arts, is the uninterrupted progress of the artist as his work advanced; the merit of his paintings might be classified in chronological order and the man who wanted to have the best need only carry away the last. If he could have lived to a hundred, like Titian, he would unquestionably have become a great painter. There is something touching in his intelligent and reflective obstinacy, which progressed towards perfection slowly but surely, never discouraged, understanding what it lacks, seeking to acquire it, and almost managing, in "The Christian Martyr," to produce a real masterpiece after so many sham ones. At a time of life when decadence has, in the case of most men, long since begun, Paul Delaroche kept on rising.

To understand how great is the distance he has traversed, one must look longer than they deserve,

perhaps, at the paintings in the first room, the oldest in point of time, and it will be seen with what blind groping, with what laborious uncertainty, with what painful stiffness, the painter's will makes its way through all obstacles. The one idea which is still quite visible is the subject, ever the main preoccupation of Delaroche. "Joash Saved from the Dead," "The Death of President Duranti," "The Death of Queen Elizabeth," "The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew," "The Death of Agostino Caracci," "Joan of Arc questioned by the Cardinal of Winchester," — all these show his seeking after funereal or violent scenes. The drawing is weak, the forms are mean or exaggerated, the colour is dull or staring; the composition alone is remarkable for its ingenious or theatrical arrangement. Such as they are, at the time when they were first exhibited these paintings must have attracted the attention of the crowd, although they could not satisfy the severe taste of connoisseurs. Delaroche, no doubt, thought them worse than any one else did, for no one was more lucidly critical concerning his own work.

"Cardinal Richelieu towing Cinq-Mars and de Thou behind his barge on the Rhone," "Cardinal Mazarin watching a game of cards from his bed,"

mark a distinct advance in the artist's work. The composition is clever; the colour, in spite of exaggerated transparencies, and glaring high-lights, does not affect one unpleasantly; the faces of the characters have the imprint of the time, the costumes are correct; the painter's thought is readily grasped, and the two paintings, reproduced by engravings, are hanging as companions on the walls of more than one drawing-room of the middle-class public.

I believe that this was the natural turn of Delaroche's talent. Episodical history, treated within these limits, suited his powers, which were delicate rather than strong. "The Assassination of the Duke of Guise," which is his masterpiece, proves this. In this case there is room for praise only. The pale, effeminate head which shows at the door and gazes fearfully at the great body that lies at the other end of the room murdered by ruffianly cut-throats, produces a dramatic impression in the truest sense of the word; it is as genuine as a scene in Shakespeare. The background, with its minute realism, imparts reality to a scene which must certainly have occurred as it is represented. The personages have the attitudes of *bravi*, and seem drawn from life by a contemporary. Never was the

local colour of any period better or more faithfully reproduced.

The "Jane Grey" is a Romanticist painting after the fashion of Casimir Delavigne, with whom Paul Delaroche had much in common. The painter and the poet might have exchanged subjects for tragedies and pictures; they both understood art in the same way, and both, therefore, won during their lifetime that popular success which serious art does not always obtain. There is a great deal of skill in this painting. The straw which is intended to soak up the victim's blood on the scaffold deceives the eye, and more than one spectator is tempted to draw out a piece of it. The little waxen hands of Jane Grey, which are put out and seem to feel for the block, formerly made a deep impression upon Philistine sensibilities, and possibly still do so. The white satin of the skirt is also very beautiful, the folds are nicely broken and shimmer with pearly tones, and are set off by light shadows. The face of the maid, who is fainting and leans against a pillar, recalls in its costume and its adornment certain figures of Holbein, although it lacks substance and is as flat as if it were cut out of paper and stuck on the gray background; nevertheless, there

is a certain feeling and sentiment about it. The violet trunk-hose of the executioner is empty, and the legs which it is supposed to cover are not indicated by any anatomical detail; yet the contrast between the lovely neck and the heavy axe makes one shudder; and it would always be difficult, if not impossible, to make a French public understand that this pathetic scene is not a good painting, and that the smallest sketch by a Venetian of the decadence, Tiepolo, Montemezzano, Fumiani, or any other whose name is not written or spoken once in ten years, fulfils much more completely the conditions of art. That very defect is the cause of Delaroche's success. Painting for a people which is literary above all things, he did not paint, but wrote his pictures, and the reasons which led me to blame him are precisely those which won him success. Yet it would be unfair not to acknowledge that there is a great deal of improvement in "Jane Grey" over "The Death of Elizabeth," in the form at least. The artist does what he wants to do, he has rendered his conception absolutely; the master begins to show.

The "Strafford" annoys the eye by the abuse of black tints, which have an ugly look of shoe-black-

ing. Artists who are colourists skilfully relieve by means of *glacis* and reflections that tint which absorbs the light and the use of which should be avoided as much as possible. Van Dyck very often painted figures dressed in black, but he did not indulge in that excess; he avoided the violet ink shade, and imparted instead a harmonious warmth which consorts with the golden whiteness of the linen of the collars. The defects in Delaroche's painting are not visible in the engraving, which exhibits merely the skilful arrangement of the composition.

In his "Saint Cecilia" Paul Delaroche seems to have felt the influence of Ingres, or rather, of the old Italian masters. He has filled in with light colour the clearly drawn contours, but he possesses neither the purity of drawing, the delicacy of modelling, nor the Gothic artlessness, which are the real charm of these archaic imitations; he cannot interest by the expression of beauty alone, he needs a subject, a scene. The angels which support the organ on which rest the ecstatic saint's fingers, are merely pretty; they lack the seraphic idealism of the figures painted by Angelo da Fiesole, Perugino, and Giovanni Bellini. But on the other hand, the drawing which he made,

tinted in pastel, for a stained-glass window, and which represents Saint Amelia offering her crown to the Virgin, is charming and worthy in every respect of being engraved by Calamatta.

It is to this period that belongs the "Young Italian and her Child." Paul Delaroche here attempted style and line. He sought to attain to the severe contour and the virile bistre colouring of the great masters of the Roman school. This painting exhibits some striking qualities, but, as I have already said, such subjects, which are excellent for thorough painters, do not suit Delaroche; they are not significant enough.

"A Mother's Choice" is painted in a dry, conventional fashion. The auburn hair, bound with cherry-coloured ribbons, that falls in waves upon rosy flesh, denotes the desire to attain a harmony which a Venetian would have secured without difficulty, but which is dulled by the brush of a painter who is less of a colourist.

The "Marie Antoinette in Prison" sins through the abuse of black of which I spoke just now. Black, like red, green, blue, — like any other colour, — has lights, half-tints, and shades; it does not make an absolutely opaque spot amid surrounding objects, it is

connected with them by reflections, by the distribution of light, by breaks, or else it makes a hole in the painting. The Queen's head is very beautiful and full of dignity. The artist has ventured to paint her with her hair prematurely turned white, her eyes reddened by tears, her face discoloured and weary. I can only regret that a weak, boneless, unarticulated hand should press against the skirt a white handkerchief which looks like a flake of foam. Among the faces half in shadow which crowd in the narrow passage as the Queen goes by, some expressing pity and others hatred, some bestial indifference and others stupid curiosity, there are well-observed and well-rendered types. The acute feeling for the dramatic which is characteristic of Delaroche betrays itself in that admirably grouped multitude.

The idea of representing Napoleon riding on a mule was bound to attract and did attract the ingenious artist in search of incidents, details, and anecdotes. Personally I prefer David's epic conception, but the crowd is delighted with this fac-simile, for it must have been just in this way that the hero crossed the Alps, just in that dress, and led by a guide through snow which, as it fell away, did not allow the names of Hannibal and Cæsar to be seen inscribed on the rocks.

The head of "Napoleon at Fontainebleau" is a good likeness and is wrought with some style and force, but you may be sure that the vulgar chiefly admire the mud stains on the imperial boots. Whom are we to blame, the painter or the vulgar crowd?

The last paintings of Delaroche show immense progress. His "Girondins" is excellent. Within the proportions of a *genre* painting, the artist has managed to give us a real historical composition without any emphasis, rhetoric, affectation, or sham poetry. He has overcome with infinite taste the difficulties presented by the costume of the time; he has given the proper likeness to every head, the proper expression, the proper manners, so to speak. As for "The Christian Martyr," there is on that pale face lighted by the halo, a reflection of the grace of Correggio. The small, intimate dramas of the Passion, although they may be reproached with lowering divine suffering to the level of humanity, are full of sentiment, of a tender, vague colour, of emotional effect, of suave touches, and prove that the artist was entering into a new sphere just as he was stopped by death. A number of pencil sketches, some brought out by pastel, deserve to be mentioned with praise. They are genu-

ine, masterly drawings, to which colour could add nothing and which it might very well spoil.

M. Goupil's portrait is famous, and that of M. Thiers is greatly lauded, but I prefer to both of those the portrait of M. E. Pereire. The face is amazingly well modelled, with its gray harmony, and the hands are perhaps the best studied out ever painted by Delaroche.

On leaving the exposition I passed into the Hemicycle where the prizes are awarded. A great mural painting spreads under the cupola, lighted by a soft, uniform light. Henriquel-Dupont's engraving made this beautiful composition so familiar to every one that it is unnecessary to describe it. Mural painting has the advantage of enlarging the manner of artists, as if painting became more robust when it comes in contact with stone. Paul Delaroche, without equalling the style of the painters whose portraits he had so vigorously grouped upon the marble benches of that ideal academy, exhibits here unmistakable qualities of drawing and colour. But how greatly superior is the modified reduction to the original.

And now, what will be Paul Delaroche's place in the future? He will be in painting what Casimir Delavigne is in poetry.

ARY SCHEFFER

BORN IN 1795 — DIED IN 1858

YOUNG men will have to work harder and to make greater efforts in order to maintain France in the leading position which she holds in the arts. They have to fill up many a break in the sacred phalanx, for death seems to prefer to strike down the most famous. He who was but a private yesterday, is now a captain. Let him remember that he has to maintain the honour of the flag. But alas! such is life, and as Glaucus said so many centuries ago, —

"As the leaves from the wood, so vanish the races of men. The wind casts down and dries the leaves, but in the spring come other leaves and other buds. Thus with mankind, — the one comes, the other goes."

I did not know Ary Scheffer personally, and I regret it, for he was one of the most remarkable figures of our age, which posterity will count among the climacteric epochs of human genius. But the stream of life bore

me elsewhere, and that face is lacking in my Pantheon. Those who saw him tell me that he had a fine romantic head, as passionate and as deep-marked as one might imagine Faust's to have been, a dark complexion, silvered in later years by long locks of white hair and tufts of gray beard, with a dreamy, melancholy, spiritual expression, entirely in harmony with his talent. He looked what he was expected to look like, which is a rare thing, and people did not say of him as of other artists no less great, "I fancied he looked differently."

The first appearance of Ary Scheffer took place at the period of glorious Renaissance which saw rise at one and the same time Eugène Devéria, Bonnington, Eugène Delacroix, Louis Boulanger, Decamps, Roqueplan, Saint-Evre, Poterlet, Paul Huet, Cabat, Théodore Rousseau, David d'Angers, Préault, and so many other fiery champions of liberty in art. Ary Scheffer was one of the first to break with the old academic traditions — his German origin made Romanticism come easily and naturally to him. All minds were then turned towards Greece, which was fighting to conquer its independence; every poet, every painter testified to this generous preoccupation by a song, or by a painting. Ary Scheffer painted the "Women of

Suli." You remember that these heroines, in order to escape the brutality of Ali Pacha's men, threw themselves from the top of a cliff. It was a fine subject for a painting. Ary Scheffer treated it with a fire of colour and a freedom of touch much more surprising at that time than now, and introduced into it at the same time, a passionate grace, a pathetic sentimentality which even now may be admired.

Like many masters Ary Scheffer had two manners, but the first has almost no relation to the second, and might be that of another painter. In his first manner he sought for colour effects, used bitumen to excess, and worked with rough touches, so that his paintings preserved the appearance of sketches. He seemed to prefer poetry, inspiration, and feeling to laborious correctness. He was, to use a term the meaning of which was more clearly understood formerly than nowadays, a real Romanticist painter; he had cast away the old, trite models used by the school of David, would have nothing to do with mythology, but borrowed his subjects from Goethe, Byron, Bürger, and the old German legends. In a word, he was orthodox in heresy. What distinguished him from his rivals, who were more exclusively painters than he, is that he

did not turn to his palette when excited directly by the sight of things; he seemed to warm himself up by reading the poets, and then to seek for forms which would express his literary impressions. Instead of looking at nature directly, he contemplated her reflection in a masterpiece. He saw with his mind's eye Marguerite traversing the drama of "Faust;" very possibly he would not have noticed her had he met her in the street. This defect, if it be one, harmonised too well with the passionate fondness for the reading of poets then felt by a young public not to have been reckoned a merit in the artist, who thus realised types dear to every one.

I remember the effect produced by his first "Marguerite," for Ary Scheffer painted quite a number. This was a half-length seated figure, in an attitude of sorrowful meditation. Her pale, fair hair was dressed in bandeaux upon her delicate temples, slightly veined with azure; on the upper part of the forehead there was a touch of silver light which was prolonged to and vanished on the edge of the profile. The rest of the head, melting and, as it were, etherealised within an azure shadow, resembling the light of German moonbeams, disappeared, vanished,

became idealised like the remembrance of a dream, through which shone the glance of an eye as blue as a forget-me-not. It was the shadow of a shade, and yet full of morbid charm, of sickly voluptuousness, of passionate languor. No doubt the neck was too long and too thin, more like a bird's than a woman's; the veins of the slender, almost transparent hands, were too blue; but a soul lived within the body itself, faintly indicated on the background, felt more than painted, and the light of the soul, like that of a lamp, illumined the picture with marvellous beauty. It was, at one and the same time, Marguerite and German poetry, a translation of Goethe more accurate in its vague fluidity than the literary translations of Stappfer, Gérard, and Henri Blaze, and the youth of the day was intoxicated with this new enchantment, and refused to listen to the morose critics who protested in the name of osteology, myology, and sound doctrine. His "Faust" also was greatly admired, and rightly. "The Giaour," whom Eugène Delacroix had represented in the battle with the terrible Hassan, with a fury of motion and a splendour of colour which he probably never surpassed, was also painted by Ary Scheffer, but in an entirely different fashion, as the solitary embodiment of Byronian poetry:

"His floating robe around him folding,
Slow sweeps he through the columned aisle;
With dread beheld, with gloom beholding
The rites that sanctify the pile.
But when the anthem shakes the choir,
And kneel the monks, his steps retire;
By yonder lone and wavering torch
His aspect glares within the porch;
There will he pause till all is done —
And hear the prayer, but utter none.
See — by the half-illumined wall
His hood fly back, his dark hair fall,
That pale brow wildly wreathing round,
As if the Gorgon there had bound
The sablest of the serpent-braid
That o'er her fearful forehead strayed;
For he declines the convent oath,
And leaves those locks' unhallowed growth."

Never was there a finer illustration — I use this word purposely — made of a poetic type.

Let me also recall "Leonora" watching from the city gates the passage of the army in which she misses her lover. The painter, no doubt in the interest of costume, indulged in a slight anachronism and put back two or three centuries the time of the fantastic story told in Bürger's ballad, but Leonora's face exhibited

the liveliest grief, and the painting had a most romantic charm.

"The King of Thule" and "Eberhard the Weeper" also belong to this first period. The pale sweet head of the young man lying in his armour was greatly admired. Rarely had death appeared more graceful, and in presence of the picture one recalled Byron's verses at the beginning of "The Giaour," on the supreme beauty which precedes the moment of decomposition in people who have died a violent death.

At that time Ary Scheffer appears to have felt the influence which induced him to change his manner. No doubt every master, when he has reached the maturity of his talent, stops, looks back over the road he has traversed, and recollects himself; he feels it necessary to come to a decision; according to his temperament, he grows calmer or more fiery; he holds himself in or he pushes on. Some remain on the plateau, others start to climb a higher summit. If the crisis is not to prove fatal, the artist who feels admiration for another must not renounce his own powers, and must not seek perfection outside of the means at his disposal. Certainly Ingres is a model who may be safely offered to young students. He

possesses the great traditions of art, the feeling for antiquity, drawing, style, but I think he is dangerous to talents already formed. In my opinion Ary Scheffer thought too much of this great artist. His "Marguerite coming out of Church" showed in the work of the painter, who until then had been Romanticist, a somewhat dry, clean outline, not justified by sufficient accuracy. "Faust beholding the Phantom of Marguerite in the Witches' Sabbath" is conceived in the same style: the colour, as pale as a wash, is contained by sharp lines. The subject, it seems to me, required more mystery, and the white shade which bears on the neck a red streak as broad as the back of a knife, would have been improved by less distinctness. Regretting his early neglect of line, Ary Scheffer tried to become a draughtsman, but one cannot go in later life from colour to drawing, which requires a particular temperament and long years of work at the age when a man studies, and not at that when he performs. For a man to do a thing, he must first know it; there is no longer time to learn, and Ary Scheffer was wrong to abandon, at the flood tide of his reputation, the vague, soft, graceful, morbid manner that was personal to him and which so admirably interpreted his ideas,

which were more literary than plastic. By the change he lost colour, chiaroscuro, and his own touch, while he did not acquire line. Yet his success was maintained, because Ary Scheffer could not renounce his own style. "Francesca and Paolo" passing against the black background of hell like two wounded doves, captivated the attention of the public, which understood the poetical thought only, and did not take note of the meagre drawing and modelling. "Mignon mourning her country" and "Mignon aspiring to Heaven" are unlike the living, real, feminine and not at all celestial type described by Goethe in "Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship and Travel," and it is difficult to recognise in that melancholy, over-spiritualised figure the ardent nostalgia of the precocious little girl who performed a country dance in a page's dress and slipped at night into the room of the beloved Wilhelm, though not on a moonbeam. Yet Ary Scheffer's "Mignon" has been so completely accepted that it has little by little taken the place of the poet's creation, and that a real portrait of her would now be considered unlike by every one, even if it whispered with true Southern passion, "Know'st thou the land where the orange blooms?"

In his "Christus Remunerator" Ary Scheffer made a supreme effort to rise to style. The composition is well ordered, the idea, though humanitarian rather than religious, was capable of suggesting fine motives to a painter. But with our artist the hand often failed to carry out the purpose, and here the intention is greater than the performance. "Dante and Beatrix," "Saint Augustine and Saint Monica," perpetuate his system of lengthening which causes the body to disappear under the stiff folds of draperies in order to bring out strongly a head, frail and sickly in its beauty, which looks up to heaven.

But this is not the time to discuss technically the work of the famous artist who has just gone down to the grave. Ary Scheffer leaves a reputation which will be increased by the admirable engravings of his work, for these reproduce his qualities merely. The graver excels in rendering the thought in a picture, and Ary Scheffer's paintings are pure thought only. Let Ingres, Delacroix, Decamps, all the well rounded, robust painters be preferred to him, — that is right; yet Ary Scheffer's place is not to be disdained. He was the Novalis of painting; if he did not possess an artist's temperament, he had an artist's soul. His life, a most

honourable one, was filled with noble aspirations only; faith, thought, work, gratitude, occupied him until the last instant. Let me add one last word. Ary Scheffer was a transposed poet. Dante, Goethe, and Byron were his masters, rather than Michael Angelo, Raphael, or Titian. He painted in accord with their conceptions, perhaps he ought to have sung like them.

HORACE VERNET

BORN IN 1789 — DIED IN 1865

I SHALL not trouble with biographical details. All I know of the man is his work, and that I am going to speak of, — its meaning, its value, its individuality; for an account of the paintings produced by that indefatigable worker would require a whole volume, and not a mere article.

It is remarkable that Horace Vernet did not take sides in any of the burning questions of art which so deeply stirred the earlier years of the present century. He was claimed neither by the school of style nor by that of colour he always escaped the hyperbolical praises and the acrimonious insults which the two parties lavished on each other in those days. In the midst of the tumult he peacefully enjoyed a popularity which the chiefs of the rival schools, in spite of their undoubted genius and the efforts of their followers, never attained. The multitude did not need to be initiated before it could understand him. He was readily com-

prehended, for he possessed a very rare quality which pedants do not prize much, the vision of modern things. Nothing seems easier than to paint what one constantly sees. Well, that is an error which can be proved by strolling through a gallery of paintings. It is surprising to notice how little the illustrious painters of all ages, of all countries, have, outside of a few portraits, succeeded in reproducing the aspect of their times and of their environments. The imitation of antiquity, the striving after idealism or style, the superb disdain which historical painting manifests for reality, the taste for composition and transposition, fashionable mannerisms, almost always draw artists away from present-day subjects, which they take up apparently with regret and which they generally misrepresent.

So the painter who devotes himself to the faithful representation of contemporary facts requires very peculiar courage, a predisposition to genius, for he has no precedents and no models other than those which reality offers him. If a painter wishes to depict the battle of Hercules and Antæus, he can turn to statues, to medals, to gems, to engravings, to paintings, to a whole academic tradition; but these resources are wholly lacking if it is a question of

painting a fight between a veteran of the Old Guard and a Cossack.

Although he does not draw the eye by any peculiarities, yet no one is more original than Horace Vernet. He owes nothing to antiquity; the Greeks and the Romans do not seem to have existed as far as he was concerned. It is impossible to compare him with the battle painters who preceded him. He resembles neither Raphael in "The Battle of Constantine," nor Lebrun in "The Conquests of Alexander," nor Salvator Rosa, nor Bourguignon, nor Van der Meulen, nor Gros, the epic painter of Aboukir and Eylau. In his battle work perhaps he recalls faintly Carl Vernet, but that is allowable in a son.

Horace Vernet's glory is the result of his having dared, first and foremost, to paint a modern battle, not an episode of a fight, — that is, a dozen warriors sabring each other in the foreground, upon rearing horses which trample under foot the classical wounded soldier, — but a real collision of two armies, with their lines deployed or concentrating, the artillery galloping the batteries thundering, the staffs and the ambulances, on some vast plain, the natural chessboard of great strategic combinations. He understood that

the modern hero is that collective Achilles which is called a regiment.

Instead of mourning the ugliness of our costumes, which are so rebellious to picturesqueness, Horace Vernet quietly accepted the man dressed in modern garb. In his work the coat took the place of the much regretted torso, the cloak with its collar did not seem to him inferior to the pallium of antiquity, and as there were no cothurns, he blacked jack-boots. He knew uniforms as thoroughly as a clothing officer; the army clothing stores gave up all their secrets to him. He was accurately acquainted with the number of buttons, the colour of the braiding, the cut of the skirts and facings, the stamping of the shako plates, with the proper way to strap haversacks, to cross belts, with the cocks of the muskets, the grenades or the horns upon cartridge boxes, with long and short gaiters, with fatigue dress and full dress; and better than all with the appearance of the soldier by the camp fire or under fire, with his usual characteristic attitudes, with the foot-soldier's shrug of the shoulders, with the dragging walk of the cavalryman, with the special type of each arm or of each campaign. No one better than he reproduced the military *chic* of a particular time, — if

I may be forgiven that piece of studio slang, which is not an academical expression, it is true, but which renders my meaning.

Having painted the soldier of the Republic and of the Empire, and preserved his special characteristics, he assimilated just as easily the soldier of the African army whom he painted with an accuracy of type, colour, and go which was never once at fault. And it is perhaps just as meritorious to bring out the characteristic traits of an army as to imitate a Syracusan medal.

In order to paint battles, a man must be able to paint horses. Many artists of talent have failed in this respect. The horse is, next to man, the most difficult creature to represent correctly. It possesses a complicated anatomy which calls for prolonged study; its paces, half natural and half acquired, are really understood by a thorough horseman only, and to show the horse moving under the rider without misrepresenting the seat or the gait is a perilous undertaking for any one who has not long been familiar with stables, riding-schools, drill-grounds, and battle-fields.

In this, as in everything else, Horace Vernet owed nothing to tradition. He did not paint the heavy, historical horse of monstrous proportions with which art

was satisfied in the days when the importance given to the human figure caused accessories to be neglected; nor did he set his dragoons and cuirassiers, like the white cavalry of the Parthenon, upon the noble animals with swelling necks and hog manes which are carved in Pentelic marble. He actually was bold enough to represent modern horses, their breed, gait, and characteristics. They certainly have not the poetic beauty of the steeds painted by Gros, nor the vigour of those whose muscles Géricault interwove under a shimmering, veiny skin; but they are irreproachable from the horseman's point of view, and the artist shows them dashing forward, held in, spurred on, rearing, galloping, leaping hedges, falling to the ground, coming head on, in profile, from behind, foreshortened, in the air, — in every possible pose, in a word, with the ease, the rapidity, and the certainty of a man for whom there are no such things as difficulties.

To all these qualities, which are indispensable to a battle painter, he united a keen feeling for the topography of a landscape; he could reproduce exactly the lay of the ground on which had been fought great battles, the subjects of his paintings, while preserving the aspect of nature and the picturesque effect. And as a man

does thoroughly well only what he is fond of, he adored war; in him the artist was partly a soldier. One of his paintings represents fairly well this double character. It represents his studio. In one corner there is a horse in a loose box; weapons of all kinds are hanging on the walls; some of the pupils are fencing; an idler sounds the charge, another is drumming; a model is posing on the table, and the painter, in front of his easel, is working peacefully in the midst of the noise, which he enjoys, for Horace Vernet was endowed with extraordinary facility. When he started to paint on a fresh canvas, you could have sworn that he was uncovering a subject already painted and covered over with tissue paper, so infallible was the rapidity with which the various portions came out under his brush. His prodigious memory for things almost saved him the trouble of making sketches; it drew in the *camera obscura* of his brain whatever was reflected in it: the silhouette of a town, the profile of a soldier, the shape of a utensil, the detail of a costume, the arabesque form of a braiding, the number on a button, the handle of a yataghan, an Arab saddle, a Kabyle mosque, — and he drew all his information from that unfailing portfolio, which he did not even need to open and to run through.

With his very first paintings, "The Trumpeter's Horse," "The Regimental Dog," which were followed by the battles of "Jemmappes," "Valmy" "Hanau," "Montmirail," and "The Clichy Toll Gate," Horace Vernet conquered his public. People admired his thoroughly French qualities, — cleverness, clearness, ease, accuracy. The subjects which he preferred to treat were bound to charm a nation in whom the military feeling has always been so strong. The African campaigns provided him with vast compositions such as "The Taking of Constantine," "The Battle of Isly," "The Smalah," in which his fully developed talent shows most brilliantly. These works, of a size not usually attempted by painters, have something of the illusion and of the magic effect produced by panoramas, and the artist has carried in them to a very high degree the power of illusion, a secondary merit, doubtless, but one not to be despised and which greatly impresses the public. "The Smalah," in which are exhibited the peculiarities of Arab life caught in picturesque disorder by a sudden invasion, with its charming barbaric luxury thrown under the horses' hoofs, offered an admirable opportunity to the painter to vary by means of piquant contrasts the regulation monotony of

uniforms. Horace Vernet, without being a brilliant colourist like Eugène Delacroix, turned to very good account the quaint weapons, the gold-striped stuffs, the coffers inlaid with mother-of-pearl, the silver-sheathed *kandjars*, the multi-coloured *atatiches*, — a sort of palanquin in which Oriental jealousy conceals its women when travelling. A silvery, clear tone, such as is produced by the white African light, illuminates this long, frieze-like canvas, which remains one of the artist's best works.

Algeria also inspired Horace with biblical subjects for a few easel paintings, in which the characters of the Old Testament are clothed in Arab burnouses, as more probable than the classical costume in which the great masters have clothed them. The unchanging East preserves its customs almost eternally, and the patriarchs could not have been very different from modern Bedouins ; but this change, in spite of its archæological probability, proved unpleasant to eyes accustomed to the conventional draperies and ornaments of vague origin in which art has always clothed these respectable and distinguished figures. The Bedouin quaintness is not very objectionable, however, in such subjects as " Thamar " or " Rebecca and Eleazar."

"Swan-necked Edith," "Judith and Holofernes," "Raphael meeting Michael Angelo on the Steps of the Vatican," "The Pope borne by the Segestaria," belong to the historical style of painting properly so-called, and in them the individual qualities of the artist have been unable to display themselves as freely as in his other works. His clean, rapid, facile manner does not make up for the lack of style.

Never was a reputation so widespread as that of Horace Vernet, who is better known to foreigners than any painter of our modern school, while his works fetch large prices abroad. His well filled career has lacked no form of glory, and he closes in triumphal fashion the illustrious dynasty of the Vernets. Of an eminently French nature, made to delight the French, he will live with Scribe, Auber, and Béranger.

EUGÈNE DELACROIX

BORN IN 1798 — DIED IN 1863

EUGÈNE DELACROIX was scarcely sixty-five, and he looked younger, for his thick black hair had not a single silver thread in it. He was not robust, but his fine, energetic, and nervous temperament gave promise of longer life. Intellectual strength made up for physical strength in him, and he was thus able to indulge in ceaseless activity. No career was better filled out than his own, although it was broken off so abruptly. Delacroix lived as long as Titian, if his years are reckoned by his works. He was a pupil of Guérin, the painter of "Dido" and "Clytemnestra," who had also Géricault and Ary Scheffer for pupils. He exhibited for the first time at the Salon of 1822. The picture was his "Dante and Virgil," which his master, startled by the tremendous dash of the work, advised him not to send in. This picture, which broke away so abruptly from academic tradition, called out enthusiastic praise on the one hand and vio-

lent opposition on the other, and marked the opening of that long battle which lasted as long as the artist lived.

The Romanticist movement, spreading from poetry into art, adopted Eugène Delacroix and defended him against the attacks of the rival camp. M. Thiers, who was then the art critic on the "Constitutionnel," wrote about this picture, so much praised and so much criticised, these remarkable lines: "At the sight of this painting, I am filled with an indefinable remembrance of the great masters. I find in it that wild, ardent, but natural power which yields without effort to its own impulse." As a matter of fact, Eugène Delacroix was henceforth a master. He was no one's imitator, and, without having to grope, he had entered into possession of his own individuality. Whatever his detractors may say, he did introduce into French painting a new element, — colour, in the widest meaning of the word. The "Massacre of Scio," which was exhibited in the Salon of 1824, filled up the measure of the wrath of the Classical school. That scene of desolation, reproduced in its full horror without a thought of conventionality, — such, in a word, as it must have occurred,— evoked an outburst of fury which it is difficult to understand to-day when one marks the

passion, the depth of sentiment, the intensely brilliant colour, the thoroughly free and vigorous execution of the painting. From that day, the jury often refused the paintings of the innovating artist, but Eugène Delacroix was not a man easily discouraged; he returned to the charge with the obstinacy of a man who is conscious of his own genius. "The Death of the Doge Marino Faliero," "Christ in the Garden of Olives," "Faust and Mephistopheles," "Justinian," "Sardanapalus," "The Battle of the Giaour and the Pacha," followed each other amid a storm of praise and insults.

To Delacroix was applied the epithet invented for Shakespeare, "drunken savage," and assuredly nothing better could be invented to mark an artist brought up in the intimate frequentation of ancient and modern poets, one who is a writer himself, a passionate dilettante, a man of the world, a charming talker, cultivated, with the keenest feeling for harmony.

After the Revolution of 1830, Eugène Delacroix painted "Liberty guiding the People on the Barricades," as a replica of Auguste Barbier's famous iambics. Then came the "Massacre of the Bishop of Liege," "The Tigers," "Boissy d'Anglas," "The Battle of Nancy," the "Women of Algiers," — a mar-

vellously varied, poetic, passionate, richly coloured series of works which I need not detail at greater length in these few lines.

Better understood and better received, Eugène Delacroix was enabled to turn his great and mighty talent to the decoration of large surfaces. He was commissioned to paint the Throne Room and the Library of the Chamber of Deputies, the cupola of the Peers' Library, the ceiling of the gallery of Apollo, a hall in the Hôtel de Ville, and finally the Chapel of the Holy Angels at Saint-Sulpice. No one better understood mural and decorative painting than he did; he exhibited qualities of the highest order in composition, and covered the buildings intrusted to his brush with a magnificent vestment flat in tone like a fresco and as velvety as tapestry. His great works did not prevent his still sending to the Salon numerous masterpieces: "Saint Sebastian," "The Battle of Taillebourg," "Medea," "The Convulsionists of Tangiers," "A Jewish Wedding in Morocco," "The Boat of Don Juan," "Trajan's Justice," "The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople," "The Rape of Rebecca," "The Ascent of Calvary," and many another painting, the meanest of which bears the unmistakable mark of the master.

The Universal Exposition in 1855 proved a veritable triumph for Delacroix; his collected works appeared in all their splendour. The most obstinate opponents of his glory could not resist this harmonious, brilliant, splendid collection of compositions so varied, so full of fire and genius. The artist received the highest award, and was appointed a commander in the Legion of Honour. Yet this great master, whose colour stands comparison with that of Titian, Paul Veronese, Rubens, and Rembrandt, was not elected a member of the Institute before 1858.

Eugène Delacroix was fortunate enough to be a prey to the fever of his time, and to represent its excited ideas with singular poetry, force, and intensity. He drew his inspiration from Shakespeare, Goethe, Byron, and Walter Scott, but freely, like a master who finds a work within a work, and who remains the equal of those whom he translates. Eckermann has recorded the admiring words of the Weimar Jove, when, at over eighty years of age, he looked over the illustrations to "Faust." The German poet had never understood his work so well as when he saw it reproduced in the lithographs of the young French master.

HIPPOLYTE FLANDRIN

BORN IN 1809 — DIED IN 1864

HIPPOLYTE FLANDRIN kept constantly within the high sphere of art, and the proofs of his genius are to be sought for on the walls of churches. He was wholly worthy to have sanctuaries for studios, for never was a more religious inspiration sustained by purer, juster, and more elevated talent than his. The beloved and fervent disciple of an austere master, towards whom he always remained in the attitude of a pupil, although he had attained to glory for many a year, he incessantly strove to realise the ideal he had learned from his teaching. He was not satisfied with seeking the beautiful, he wanted to express holiness; the purified human form was constantly used by him to render the divine idea. There was in him something of the tender timidity, the virginal delicacy, and the seraphic etherealness of Fra Beato Angelico, but the simplicity of his sentiment was backed by deep knowledge.

Practically and genuinely pious, he brought into religious painting an element exceedingly rare in these days, — faith. He believed sincerely in what he painted, and did not try to realise the desired situation by factitious enthusiasm; he was in his element, it was the air which he breathed; he soared in it with well trained and confident wing. No modern painter has come nearer the old masters without falling into archaic imitation.

Every one remembers the sensation produced in 1832 by his "Theseus recognised by his Father at the Banquet," which won the grand prize of Rome, and which already proved that the young painter possessed well developed and promising talent. Hippolyte Flandrin painted during his stay in Italy, at greater or less intervals, "Saint Clare healing the Blind," "Æschylus writing his Tragedies," "Dante in the Circle of the Envious," "Jesus and Little Children." On his return to Paris he painted the "Saint Louis dictating his Orders," the "Mater Dolorosa," "Napoleon Legislator," and several other meritorious works. But in spite of the art which he exhibited in these, it may be affirmed that he had not yet found his real line, — mural and religious painting. The Chapel of Saint

John, in the Church of Saint-Séverin, is notable for the austere simplicity, the masterly sobriety, and the neglect of empty effects which are characteristic of painting associated with architecture and forming one with it. Never, perhaps, did the artist draw more admirably and firmly. Unfortunately the inferior quality of the material has damaged these noble compositions in several places, and before long they will have scaled away and vanished. The vast frieze of Saint-Vincent de Paul, on which passes the long procession of all the characters in the "Golden Legend," the martyred saints, the holy confessors, the blessed virgins, has won the name of Christian Pantheon by the beauty of the style, the rhythm of the groups, the arrangement of the figures. It is indeed Greek art christianised, and which would do honour to the Frieze of the Parthenon if the building were changed to a church. Saint-Germain-des-Prés received from Hippolyte Flandrin a vestment of admirable paintings which cover the choir and the Romanesque nave in such a way that one no longer regrets their ancient splendour. The indefatigable artist, forgetful of the fact that his labour, greater than human strength could bear, was draining away his life, painted also the church of Saint-

Paul at Nîmes and the apse of the church of Ainay at Lyons, — his masterpiece, say the pious visitors who are fortunate enough to have seen it.

Let me add that Hippolyte Flandrin was, like all great masters, like Albert Dürer, Holbein, Titian, Velasquez, an excellent portrait painter. It is sufficient to recall, among his more recent portraits, those of Count Walewski, Prince Napoleon, and the Emperor, which are so masterly and so admirable in likeness. Into the portraits of women he introduced a modest grace, an exquisite distinction, a peaceful serenity, the effect of which was both deep and irresistible. No one better painted the portraits of honest women and in a more chaste and reserved fashion. How great was the success of that delightful portrait of a young girl holding a flower in her hand, called "The Young Girl with the Carnation," just as one speaks of Raphael's madonnas as the "Madonna with the Veil," or the "Madonna della Sedia!" The gentle painter with the angelic name would willingly sign that charming canvas of the purest of his admirers if he could return to life.

GAVARNI

BORN IN 1801 — DIED IN 1866

THE ancient world still so masters us from the depth of the ages that we scarcely have the feeling of our surrounding civilisation. In spite of the efforts of Paris and London, Athens and Rome remain the capitals of thought. Every year there issue from colleges thousands of young Greeks and Romans who know nothing of modern affairs. More than any one I admire the persistent force of thought, the eternal power of beauty; but is it not strange that art should reflect contemporary times so little? Classical studies inspire a profound disdain for modern manners, habits, and customs, which are so rarely reproduced on monuments, statues, *bassi-relievi*, medals, paintings, furniture, and bronzes that future chroniclers will find it very difficult to restore them or to reproduce them in a "Paris in the Days of Napoleon III." What idea, for instance, could people have, in the year 3000, of

our fashionable ladies, of our famous beauties, those we love and for whom we have indulged in greater or less follies, even if the larger portion of the works of our masters had not then disappeared?

Ingres is an Athenian, a pupil of Apelles and Phidias, whose soul has evidently mistaken its age and come into the world twenty-four hundred years too late. His paintings might be placed in the Pinacothek of the Propylæa; his portraits, antique in style and of no particular time, become eternal. Delacroix scarcely touches a subject outside of history, the East, or Shakespeare; scarcely among his numerous works does one come across a contemporary type; without going back to antiquity like Ingres, he goes back to the Venetians and the Flemings, and is modern in his nervousness and passion only. He has composed his own microcosm by a sort of internal vision, and one could swear that he had not once looked around him. What I say of these two illustrious masters, who with us represent the two sides of art, is equally true of all the others. The realistic attempts made in these latter days seek an ugly ideal rather than the accurate reproduction of nature. The few true types of genre paintings are almost all taken from the rustic classes;

and it may be said in perfect security that neither the men nor the women of the world, nor almost any of the numerous members of the society of the nineteenth century have left any trace in the higher art of our day.

Unquestionably the Venus of Milo is a wonderful statue, lovingly polished by the kisses of centuries; it has the supremest beauty, it is the most perfect effort of human genius to express the ideal, and I myself worship that sublime torso, the divinity of which no one can deny. But have not Parisian women their charms? Could not sculpture, if it chose to do so, discover the fair lines of their elegant bodies under the cashmere, the fold of which outlines the roundest neck and which with its fringe kisses the heel of a pretty shoe? The drapery of Polyhymnia clings in no more supple manner than these great Indian shawls to the shoulders and the backs of well-bred women. Henri Heine, who so thoroughly understood plasticity, was not mistaken on this point. He would follow a woman draped in her shawl as if she were a Greek goddess in a Parian *chlamyd*. As for Balzac, he certainly preferred to all the female deities of Olympus, even to Venus "adorably exhausted," as Goethe says,

Madame Firmiani, Madame de Beauséant, Madame de Mortsauf, the Duchess de Maufrigneuse, the Princess Cadignan, Lady Dudley, Madame Marneffe, even, perhaps. Are these lovely faces, of a rosy pallor, framed in by their pretty bonnets like angels' heads smiling in an ideal flower, with wavy or smooth hair which Praxiteles himself would not disturb if he had to copy them in marble, — are they unworthy of being reproduced in a medal? Does not the dressing of the hair for a ball afford an intelligent artist every possible resource, — pearls, flowers, feathers, sprays, nets, knots, bands, shining bandeaux, long curls, fluffy crimps, heavy chignons twisted like the horn of Ammon, or negligently tied? The dresses, in spite of the passing exaggeration of flounces and of crinoline, appear, by the richness of the brocade, of the watered silk, of the satin, and by the *frou-frou* of the taffeta, the transparency of the lace, of the gauze, of the tulle, of the tarletan, the brilliancy and the suaveness and the variety of the tones, to invite a colourist's brush and to offer to him a palette of seductive tints. But the colourist does not look at these bouquets of tone which bloom at promenades, at parties, at receptions, in the boxes at the theatres; he prefers to dip his brush into

the red gold of Rembrandt, the mat silver of Paul Veronese, or the blazing purple of Rubens; while the sculptor strips of her garments on some public square a shivering nymph, who is ashamed and dismayed at finding herself nude.

Leaving the Greeks and the Romans on one side, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Titian have preserved the beauties of their day, eternal memories, which poets gaze at dreamily in the galleries, their hearts filled with an irresistible retrospective desire. There is scarce a woman of mark of the sixteenth century, princess or courtesan, grand duke's or painter's mistress, whose image has not come down to us made divine by art. Our day will hand down nothing of the sort to future ages. Our artists seem to dread women. The fear of falling into a false classical idea has urged them to be vigorous and characteristic and to seek violent effects; few have troubled themselves about modern beauty. To find traces of it, the future will have to consult the portraits painted by certain fashionable artists who sought rather to satisfy the taste of society people than to fulfil the strict requirements of art, — painters such as Winterhalter, Dubuffe, father and son, Pérignon, and some others.

It seems to me that Vidal, if he had not let himself drift into graceful and coquettish fancies, could have rendered the impression of delicate beauty and of dainty elegance which a society woman setting out for a ball and drawing on her gloves before her mirror makes upon one.

This preamble, which may strike the reader as somewhat long, is intended to bring out fully the originality of Gavarni and the value of his work, scattered in books and albums, in collections and detached engravings. He has no predecessor or rival in our own day; he has the not slight glory of being frankly, exclusively, absolutely modern. Like Balzac, with whom he has more than one characteristic in common, he has also produced his Human Comedy, less broad and less all-embracing no doubt, but very complete in its way, although slightly exaggerated; for while the nib of the pen runs on the paper, the point of the lithographic pencil spreads on the stone. Gavarni, an admirable draughtsman and an admirable anatomist in his own way, is absolutely careless of the traditional sculptural forms; he makes men, and not statues dressed up. No one knows better than he does the wretched frame of our bodies wasted by civilisation; he is acquainted

with the leanness, the wretchedness, the bald-headedness of Parisian dandies; their grotesque stoutness, their heavy wrinkles, their big feet, their bossy knees; the bandy legs of protectors, of bankers, of so-called serious men; and he dresses up all these people just as Chevreuil or Renard might do it. With a stroke of the pencil he gives an overcoat the cut of a sack; he puts straps on a pair of trousers; he throws back the lapels of an overcoat; he opens or buttons a waistcoat; he smooths or roughens the black silk of a stovepipe hat, he puts on gloves, or sticks an eyeglass in the eye; gives a curve to the stick and makes the watch-charms rattle; gives cloth a worn or well-brushed look; makes the appearance stylish or vulgar, and gives to the elbow, to the outline, to the waist of each garment the characteristic fold which reveals affectation, habit, vice, and which relates a whole life.

If you wish to find the Parisian of 1830 nowadays, with his costume, his coat, his attitude and physiognomy, truthful and without caricature, but merely touched up with that clever stroke which is the very spirit of the artist, glance through Gavarni's work. It will soon be as full of information as the engravings of Gravelot, Eisen, Moreau, and the water-colours of

Baudoin in the last century. But Gavarni's greatest glory is not merely that he has understood the Parisian, who is considered impossible by contemporary art; he has understood the Parisian woman, and not only understood but loved her, which is the true and only way to understand. You may be sure he did not trouble much about the figures on the Parthenon, the Venus of Milo, or the Diana of Gabies, and that he discovered a very satisfying ideal in the little perky face of the Parisian woman, whose pretty ugliness is itself graceful. What if the nose is not absolutely straight, the cheeks round rather than oval, the mouth curling a little at the corners, letting the tip of the tongue show; the neck slender and lacking in its plump flesh the three folds of Aphrodite's collar, the waist too much drawn in by the corsets, making the hips stand out overmuch, — what does all that matter? It is not a nymph of antiquity that he proposes to draw, but a woman who passes by and whom you are following; he is not making lithographs from the round, but from life.

Long before Alexandre Dumas the younger, Gavarni had sketched the Lady with the Camellias, and told in his drawings and letterings the story of the *demi-monde;*

and how cleverly, with what easy dash, with what perfect good-breeding! Mademoiselle de Beauperthuis, M. Coquardeau, and Arthur have become known to everybody; they are living characters in the eternal comedy. The *lorette*, thanks to Roqueplan who christened her and Gavarni who noted her changing appearance, will go down to the most distant posterity. She is neither the Greek *hetaira*, nor the Roman courtesan, nor the impure woman of the Regency, nor the kept woman of the Empire, nor the *grisette* of the Restoration; she is the special product of our busy ways, the free-and-easy mistress of an age which has not time to fall in love and which is greatly bored at home. At her house you may smoke, stand on your head, stick your feet up on the mantelpiece, say whatever you please, even coarse pleasantries and low equivoques; you are no more restricted than among men, and you leave when you feel like it, which is the highest pleasure. And then, after all, *lorettes* are jolly girls. They have all been, more or less, supernumeraries, actresses, music teachers; they know the slang of sport, of the studio, of the stage; they can dance splendidly, play a waltz, sing a little bit, and roll a cigarette like a Spanish smuggler, — some even can actually spell; but

their chief talent is playing patience. As for their lustral toilet, the bayaderes of the Benares pagodas are not more careful to descend the white marble steps which lead to the Ganges and to wash within the sacred river. As regards their dress, it is only the thorough-bred Parisian who can tell, by some excess of luxury or some slight neglect, that it is not that of a woman of the world; foreigners are almost always taken in, even Russians, who are so very French. Sometimes they are not dressed in just the latest fashion, sometimes in the fashion which is going to be. They can wear anything, — watered silk and velvet and feathers in their bonnets, and lace capes, and boots which fit the foot, and men's cuffs and the cloth riding-habit, — everything except the long shawl; therein lies the superiority of the honest woman. No Lady with the Camellias, no Marble Heart, no *lorette* can resist the temptation of somewhat stretching the shawl with her elbows in order to show off her waist and to suggest very gently the rich outline of the hips. Gavarni understands all these shades and expresses them with the quick, easy stroke of a pencil which is always sure of what it is doing. With him we enter richly furnished boudoirs full of china vases and of old Sèvres, in

which flash Venetian mirrors and candelabra with twisted arms; where we see lying on a divan the goddess of the place, half dressed in a long wrapper with a loosened girdle, twisting her slipper at the end of her bare foot, and blowing from her rosy lips the smoke of the *papelito*, while a female friend tells her some funny stories or a gentleman who is more or less of a rider bites the tip of his stick while churning over a declaration of love. The furniture, the costumes, the accessories, the fashions, — all are rendered with perfect propriety, with intimate modernity, which no one possesses in the same degree. The gesture is correct, accurate, and especially of the day; that is just the way we rise, sit down, hold our hat, put on our gloves, bow, open and shut doors; you can see there is a living body under the overcoats, the cloaks, the frock coats, which is not always the case under the pseudo-antique draperies of historical painters. For, as I have said before, Gavarni is a great anatomist. The woman of the present day, not to be found in our paintings, lives in the historical lithographs of our artist, with her coquettish mannerism, her witty gracefulness, her dainty elegance, her problematic but irresistible beauty. And all those faces are so charming! How those eyes

flash! how delightful are those tip-tilted noses! what pretty dimples for Cupids to hide in! what well shaped chins, softly rounded above a bow of ribbon! what fresh cheeks caressed by a curl of hair! What delightful realities and what charming shams under the mass of lace, cambric, and taffeta! Certainly there are women more beautiful, nobler, and purer, and all this is not the supreme expression of feminine beauty in our day; but Gavarni has none the less reproduced one of the profiles of modern beauty. Is not Gavarni the painter and the historian of that Carnival of Paris, which only lacks the Piazza, the Piazzetta, and the Grand Canal to surpass the old-time Carnival of Venice? While that infernal gallop — a regular round of the Sabbath of Pleasure — is whirling to the sound of a tremendous orchestra, a man stands there leaning against a pillar, looking, watching, noting, and tomorrow the *débardeuses* in velvet trousers with lace flounces, broad silk girdles setting off their waists, fine cambric chemises with rosy transparencies, and their high kicking, will be reproduced upon the lithographic stone; the dominoes will whisper under the satin and lace of the mask; the white *pierrots* will wave their long sleeves, flapping their wings like penguins; the

varnished cardboard noses of serious men will be seen at full length; the bells of Folly will sparkle and tinkle; the plumes will stand up on the Roman helmets; the necklaces of civilised savages will rattle. Through the dazzling whirl, the misty light of the chandeliers, the tumult of voices and orchestra, the artist has noted every type, every turn, every face; he inspires all the masks with his wit, even if they are stupid; he sums up with a witty remark the jest of the foyer, he translates into a droll inscription the hoarse sound of the rumour; and then takes his *pierrettes*, *pierrots*, *débardeurs*, *débardeuses*, dominoes, and fashionables to the Café Anglais and the Maison Dorée and intoxicates them with his fun, which is more exhilarating and sparkling than champagne.

Who is there that is not acquainted with his "Spoiled Children," and especially with his "Spoiled Parents," — those tell everything, these take the poetry out of everything, — "What People Say and What They Think," "Masks and Faces," "Worms Will Bite," "Returned from Somewhere," and all the series, so capitally drawn, so thoroughly philosophical, which one is never tired of looking over? The explanations added to each drawing are often a comedy or a vaude-

ville in themselves; they are always as good as a maxim of La Rochefoucauld's. How many a time have composers of vaudevilles and reviews borrowed from these clever sayings! There are very few plays on which Gavarni, did he choose to do so, could not claim a royalty.

Do not suppose that because he has drawn particularly the Bohemia of pleasure and sketched the curious manners of that world into which the most austere have set foot, Gavarni lacks the moral sense. Glance through the album called "The Aged Lorettes," and you will see that his lithographic pencil punishes vice as much as does Hogarth's brush. The frayed petticoats, the worn folds of plaid skirts, the checkered handkerchiefs, the pitiful shoes that let in the water, the wan faces, hollow cheeks, sunken eyes surely compensate for the many-flounced gowns, the long cashmere shawls that fell to the ground, the bonnets and feathers, the red-heeled shoes, and all the long vanished insolent luxury. These poor girls may be forgiven for having been pretty, proud, and triumphant. May the rice powder rest lightly upon them!

"Thomas Vireloque," although somewhat misanthropical, is good company; Diogenes, Rabelais, and

Sancho Panza would nod approvingly at more than one of his aphorisms. This type, created by Gavarni, will certainly live.

In this rapid sketch I have not even endeavoured to describe the multiform work of the master; I have simply tried to mark the chief features of that artistic physiognomy, so original, so living, so modern, which criticism, too much occupied with supposedly serious talents, has not studied with the attention which it certainly deserved.

The name which Gavarni made illustrious was not his own; he was really called Sulpice-Paul Chevallier, and he had borrowed from one of his first publications that graceful pseudonym which so thoroughly suited his light, elegant, and free talent. The early part of Gavarni's career was hard, and he had turned thirty before he managed to make his mark. I knew him about that time. He was a handsome young fellow with abundant fair, curly hair, very careful in his dress, very fashionable in his attire, somewhat English in his accurate way of dressing, and having in the highest degree the feeling of modern elegance. He never worked but in a black velvet jacket, well-cut trousers with straps,

a fine cambric shirt with frill, and patent-leather shoes with red heels, — exactly as he may be seen in his portrait drawn by himself, seen from the back, on the cover of one of Hetzel's illustrated publications. He looked rather like a dandy who dabbled in art than like an artist, in the somewhat vague meaning of that word; and yet what an obstinate, what an incessant, what a fertile worker he was! An immense building might be erected with the lithographic stones upon which he has drawn.

It may be affirmed that Gavarni, although very well known, very popular, and even famous, was not fully appreciated, any more than Daumier, Raffet, and Gustave Doré, brilliant as is the reputation of the latter. The French like sterling talents, and are strangely mistrustful of fertility. How is it possible to believe in the merit of multiplied works which you come across every day either in a newspaper or in a magazine, especially when they are living, clever, drawn from our very manners, full of fire, go, and dash, original in thought, conception, and execution, owing nothing to antiquity, expressing our loves, our aversions, our tastes, our caprices, our peculiarities, showing the clothes in which we dress, the types of gracefulness

and of coquetry which please us, and the very surroundings amid which our lives are passed? All that does not seem serious, and a man who would admire a naked Ajax, a Theseus, a Philoctetes, would willingly look down upon Gavarni's Parisians.

No one knew better than Gavarni how to draw a black coat and a modern body, and that is not an easy matter. Just ask the painters of high life. Humann admired him. Under that coat the artist with three strokes of his pencil could put a human armature with accurate joints, easy movements, — a living being, in a word, capable of turning around, of coming, of going. Very often Delacroix looked with a thoughtful glance at these apparently trivial drawings that were so thoroughly true. He was surprised at the perfect posing of the figures, the cohesion of the limbs, at the attitudes so cleanly drawn, at the simple and natural mimicry. Every year made Gavarni's drawing easier, freer, and broader; neither the pencil nor the lithographic stone seemed to present any obstacles to him; he did with them as he pleased.

In that nature of his, which was so peculiarly original, there was, besides the artist and the philosopher, the writer, who in a couple of lines at the foot of his

drawings, wrote more comedies, vaudevilles, and studies of manners than all the other authors of our time taken together. Gavarni was the wit-maker of his day; most of the witticisms of these latter years have come from him; his influence, though unconfessed, has been very great. He invented a more amusing, more fantastic, and more picturesque carnival than the ancient carnival of Venice. His types are creations copied by reality, which later imitated his drawings. It is he who imparted the life of art to Bohemians, students, painters, *lorettes*; he revealed the treacheries of women, the terrible artlessness of children, what people say and what they think, not like a morose preacher, after the fashion of Hogarth, but like an indulgent moralist who is acquainted with human frailty and is forgiving to it.

And yet it would be a great mistake to suppose that Gavarni is merely graceful, witty, and elegant. His "Aged Lorettes," with their comically gloomy legends, are positively terrible. Thomas Vireloque, the tramp whose garments are torn by every bramble, casts with his one eye as clear, as deep, as single a glance upon life and humanity as ever did Rabelais, Swift, or Voltaire.

Gavarni brought back terrifying pictures, sinister

phantoms, more hideous and more painful than the visions of a nightmare, from the poor wretches he observed in Saint Giles during his stay in London.

His way of working was peculiar. He used to begin trifling on the stone without having any settled subject or plan. Little by little the figures began to show, assumed the appearance of life, and were provided with features; they went and came, busy at something or another. Gavarni listened to them, tried to make out what they were saying, just as when you see a stranger walking and gesticulating along the boulevard. Then, when he had got the correct legend, he wrote, or rather, dictated it.

For a few years past Gavarni, although still as much sought after, had somewhat given up drawing. His mind, always fond of exact sciences, was turning towards higher mathematics, and he gave himself up to the solution of difficult problems for which he found new and curious solutions. He took great pleasure in that work in which numbers grow infinitely and produce most amazing combinations. He was not one of those chimerical seekers after the squaring of the circle or perpetual motion, but a sound mathematician prized by the Institute.

He died in that Auteuil villa in which I was his neighbour some twenty years ago, and the garden of which, since then cut up by the building of the railway, contained only evergreen trees, cedars, pines, hemlocks, thuyas, box, holly, green oaks, ivy, and firs, so that the sombre verdure made it look like a cemetery garden. It appears that that collection of evergreens was unrivalled, and the artist, who was also a horticulturist, prized it very highly.

DAVID D'ANGERS

BORN IN 1789 — DIED in 1856

IT is possible to collect in one's library all the works of one's favourite poet or author, for printing enables a sufficient number of copies to be struck off to satisfy all admirers. But an artist's statues and paintings, necessarily unique, are scattered, adorn distant museums, are in places which often one knows not of, are buried within some inaccessible collection, are sometimes destroyed by fire, by the action of time, by carelessness, by enmity, or in some other way. However careful one may be in following the career of a sculptor or a painter, some of his work escapes attention, and although I thought that I knew David d'Angers', I was surprised, on turning over the engravings of his works, at the great number of things new to me which it contained; for David was a hard worker. It is amazing how much clay he kneaded, how much marble he carved, how much bronze he moulded,

from 1810 to 1855; his statues are almost numerous enough to form a people.

In 1815 David was at Rome as a prize winner. His "Dying Orthryadas" had won him a second prize, and his bas-relief of "The Death of Epaminondas" was the means of sending him to the Eternal City. In spite of its necessarily classic style, the "Orthryadas" already exhibits traces of originality, and the carefully studied forms prove David's desire for truth. The bas-relief of the "Death of Epaminondas" has more life than is usually seen in that class of compositions, in which the student, in order to render his severe judges favourable to himself, seeks correctness more than any other merit.

The "Nereid bearing the Helmet of Achilles," a marble bas-relief, exhibits true Greek grace in the figure. This piece of work, which was sent from Rome and which is dated 1815, suggests that young David (then twenty-three years of age) was feeling the influence of antiquity exclusively. The masterpieces of Greek and Roman statuary must have impressed him deeply and have carried the day over his own tendencies. The Nereid, seen from behind lying on a dolphin, raises with one hand the helmet of Achilles,

and with the other holds the end of a floating drapery, the folds of which are broken and fringed like the foam curl of a wave. The line, which, springing from the bent waist, swells with the hip and is prolonged to the toe, is lovely in its elegance. As a companion to this figure, David blocked out a "Nereid bearing the Shield of Achilles," but this work was not finished, which is a pity. The pose is excellent. The nymph, bestriding a marine monster, is seen full face; her arms hold the buckler most gracefully, and her crossed feet enable her to retain her equilibrium upon the back of her steed.

The "Shepherd," sent from Rome in 1817, is a small figure, quite artless, of juvenile gracility which somewhat recalls the manner of Donatello, but the master's individual feeling does not yet manifest itself; for David was later a Romanticist sculptor within the limits of that severe and accurate art of his, the true environment of which was antiquity with its anthropomorphous polytheism. As soon as David had mastered his tools and the secrets of his art, as soon as he was able to express his idea freely, he bethought himself more of character than of beauty. The deep rhythm of Greek line appeared to him cold and even conventional; antique heads, with their serene placid-

ity, struck him as almost always wanting in expression, at least to eyes accustomed to the complications of modern life. More than any other sculptor he paid attention to the human face. For sculptors in general, the head is merely a detail of the body ; the torso is quite as important, if not more so ; unconsciously pagan, they do not pay sufficient attention to that transparent mask on which the soul leaves a visible trace.

David d'Angers indulged this interest of his greatly ; he constantly sought the opportunity to reproduce in the shape of busts or medals contemporary celebrities. He went to Weimar to make a bust of Goethe ; he made one of Chateaubriand, of Béranger, of Lamennais, of Arago, of Balzac. He delighted in noting how genius showed in the external modelling as by a sort of hammered work, marked the skull with bumps and the brow with protuberances, kneaded, moulded, and wrinkled the cheeks. In him the physiognomist and the phrenologist mingled with the sculptor in rather excessive proportions, for he often exaggerated beyond the limits of possibility the organs of some faculty which he believed he had discovered in his model, or which really existed in it. His monumental busts are nevertheless superb pieces of work, and will

go down to posterity as final and accepted types of the celebrities they represent. It is difficult to imagine Goethe in any form other than that in which he is represented by David d'Angers.

The profiles which he moulded with swift and sure touch, with deep feeling for physiognomy, will form a complete collection of medals of the nineteenth century, for almost all the various classes of celebrities are represented in it by their leaders. This forms not the least interesting part of David d'Angers' work. His medals, in their accurate, delicate modelling, are not in the least worked out from the point of view of the ancients. The sculptor did not try to make his contemporaries into Syracusan medals, he takes them as they are, with their hair long or short, bristling or smooth, bald-headed, moustached, bewhiskered, with chins shaven, with coat, collar, and cravat if necessary, and in this respect he is thoroughly modern.

Few sculptors have shared as much in the intellectual movements of their day. Not that David d'Angers was a literary man, but he was full of ideas, and he thought it was the duty of the artist to represent them, or at least to have them reflected in his work. He therefore lived intimately with poets, and more

than one magnificent ode testifies to the noble exchanges of admiration which were so frequent in the heyday of Romanticism; his marble was often returned to him in the shape of verse no less solid and lasting. For my part, I believe that the marble of Paros and Corinth should express beauty first and foremost, and not a political or a philosophical idea, and I therefore regret the often useless trouble which David d'Angers took to make his art fit in with his system. Happily in his work the number of statues which he forgot to so fit in is large. "The Maiden by the Tomb of Marco Botzaris," writing with her finger in the dust the name of the illustrious dead, comes within the compass of pure art, in spite of the Philhellenic preoccupations of the time. The lovely body, in its chaste nudity, has all the gracefulness of a nymph, and a truthfulness and a *morbidezza* which transform the marble into flesh. "The Young Drummer Barra" has nothing left of his uniform save the drumstick which he still holds with the dying hand, and exhibits a delicate torso somewhat slender in form, as delicate and as pure as that of Hyacinth fallen under the blow dealt by Apollo. "The Child with the Bunch of Grapes," celebrated by Sainte-Beuve in ex-

quisite verse on an old rhythm of Ronsard's, is worthy of the rimes it has inspired. It is a piece of work worthy of antiquity. "Philopœmen drawing the Arrow from his Wound" represents, in spite of the Greek subject, a wholly modern body, but so carefully studied, so absolutely true, that one does not regret the purer and fuller forms which an Athenian sculptor would doubtless have given us. That excellent piece of work does the greatest honour to David, and counts among the best produced by artists in our day.

There was a grave question, not yet settled, which then excited studios and literary circles: Should contemporary celebrities be represented in their modern dress, or in a state of apotheosis and of ideal nudity as the sculptors of antiquity represented their contemporaries? The Romanticists, through a sort of reaction against pseudo-classicism, were in favour of the absolute reproduction of the costume. They wanted to have the Emperor wear his three-cornered hat and his gray riding-coat, and not the *pallium* of the Roman Cæsars. David d'Angers did not quite make up his mind one way or the other; although his liking for realism inclined him to accurate reproduction of costume, his sculptor's instinct drew him towards the nude,

without which there can be no real sculpture; so he represents Corneille in the costume of the day, somewhat modified and wearing a cloak, and on the other hand, Racine nude and wearing a Greek chlamyd the folds of which he brings back over his breast like an Athenian tragic poet. General Foy has a cloak only in the figure which crowns his monument, but he is dressed in the bas-relief which represents him amid his illustrious contemporaries.

This apparent contradiction can be explained. The bas-relief represents the man such as he was; in the statue he is transformed, deified to a certain extent, for it represents the man's genius. In his remarkable Pantheon pediment, David mingles allegorical and realistic figures; the former are nude or draped, the latter wear the costume of their day. The statue of Talma might be that of Roscius, but an actor has no proper costume and it is permissible to give to the tragedian of modern days the attitude and nudity of antiquity. Later, however, urged no doubt by literary reasons, David d'Angers resolutely gave to his statues of illustrious personages the costume of the time in which they lived, and being unable to exhibit his profound knowledge of anatomy under the

more or less eccentric forms of dress, he concentrated his whole talent on the heads and faces.

He added to the statue of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre a delightful group of Paul and Virginia asleep under a tropical plant, their childish arms interlaced. He carved superb Victories in the panels of the Triumphal Arch at Marseilles; great allegorical figures of robust and masterly port; he placed beautiful women by the Œil-de-bœuf of the Louvre; and every time that an opportunity occurred to place a Mourning Genius or a Weeping Virtue upon a tomb, he seized upon it. But in spite of the number of such examples, the most remarkable part of his work is the representation of illustrious men, the glorifying of human genius; Corneille, Racine, Goethe, Humboldt, Cuvier, Byron, Rossini, Alfred de Musset, are represented by statues, busts, or medals. I have merely mentioned a few names here and there; warriors and statesmen also have their place in this sculptured Pantheon which David d'Angers made of his own accord, often for marble or bronze, very often for nothing, moved by admiration, enthusiasm, or sympathy.

His last work was the statue of Arago lying in eternal rest on the marble of the tomb. He was faithful

to the mission of his whole life, which was to fix the features of the man of genius and to bestow upon him the longest eternity which art grants, that of sculpture. Thus it is that the name of David d'Angers is linked with the names of all the famous men who fill the first half of this century, and is inscribed upon their august images. This was his individual, his distinctive character.

Portraits of the Day

MADEMOISELLE FANNY ELSSLER

THE newspapers trouble themselves only about the talent and the art of actresses; their beauty is never analysed, they are never looked at from a purely plastic point of view. Occasionally, it is true, their gracefulness, their daintiness, is mentioned, but that is all.

Yet an actress is a statue or a picture which poses before you, and she may be criticised safely; she may be reproached with her ugliness, just as a painter would be reproached for violating the rules of drawing (the question of feeling pity for human defects is out of place here); her charms may be praised with the same indifference as a sculptor exhibits who, in the presence of a statue says, "That is a fine shoulder, or a well-turned arm."

No newspaper dwells on this important point, so that the reputation of pretty actresses is the work of chance, and usually is far from being deserved. Besides, many of these reputations for beauty have lasted

for more than a half-century, which is in truth too long.

Numberless heroic generals, charming functionaries of the Empire and no less delightful provincials, even thorough-bred Parisians, yet admire the traditional and mythological bloom of Mademoiselle Mars, the inimitable Célimène, a bloom which goes back to fabulous times. In general, handsome actresses are fairly ugly, — it is just to them to say so, — and if they did not have the stage for a pedestal, no one would pay any attention to them; they would be classed with ordinary women and with honest women who themselves have no other merit than that they are not men, as is easily seen when they abandon the dress of their sex to put on ours.

All this has no reference to Mademoiselle Fanny Elssler, who is in the flower of her youth and her beauty, and has the advantage of not having been admired by our grandfathers. She is tall, supple, and well built; she has slender wrists and well-turned ankles. Her legs, shapely and clean, recall the vigorous slenderness of the legs of Diana, the virgin huntress; the kneecap is fair, and stands out well, — the whole knee is irreproachable. Her legs differ greatly

from those of most dancers, whose whole body seems to have settled down within the stockings; they are not legs like those of a parish beadle or a knave of clubs, which excite the enthusiasm of Anacreontic old men in the orchestra stalls and make them polish carefully the lenses of their glasses, but two beautiful legs of antique statues, worthy to be moulded and lovingly studied. I hope I may be forgiven for talking so much about legs, but I am writing about a dancer.

Here is another point worthy of praise: Mademoiselle Elssler has rounded, well-turned arms; the bones do not show at the elbow; they resemble in no way the wretched arms of her companions, the dreadful leanness of which makes them look like lobsters' claws.

Her figure is pretty well rounded, and — which is rare among dancers, to whom the double hills and the snowy mounts so often sung by schoolboys and song writers appear to be totally unknown — one does not see moving on her back those two bony squares which look like the roots of wings which have been torn out.

As for the shape of her head, I confess it does not appear to me as graceful as people describe it. Mademoiselle Elssler has beautiful hair which falls on either side of her temples, shining and lustrous like a bird's

wing. The dark colour of her hair shows somewhat too Southern against the distinctively German character of her face. That sort of hair does not properly belong to such a head and such a body. This peculiarity troubles the eye and disturbs the harmony of the whole. Her eyes, very dark, which look like two little jet stars upon a crystal sky, are entirely different from the nose, which is wholly German as well as the brow. Mademoiselle Elssler has been called a Spaniard of the North, and this was intended as a compliment. It is her defect. She is German by her smile, the whiteness of her skin, the outline of her face, the placidity of her brow; she is Spanish by her hair, her small feet, her slender, delicate hands, the somewhat bold turn of her waist. Two different natures and two different temperaments struggle in her; her beauty would be improved if one of the types prevailed. She is pretty, but she lacks distinctive racial traits; she is neither quite Spanish nor quite German, and the same indecision is to be noticed in her sexual characteristics. Her hips are not much developed, her bosom does not exceed that of the Hermaphrodite of antiquity; just as she is a very charming woman, she would be the loveliest boy possible.

I shall finish this portrait with a little advice. Mademoiselle Elssler's smile does not show often enough. Sometimes it is forced and strained; it shows the gums too much. In certain attitudes, when she bends, the lines of her face do not show properly, the eyebrows become thin, the corners of the mouth are turned up, and the nose looks pointed, which gives her face a disagreeable expression of sly malice. Mademoiselle Elssler should also dress her hair lower; if she did so, she would break the line of the shoulders and neck, which is too square. I also advise her to dye the ends of her pretty, slender fingers a less brilliant rose. It is a needless addition.

Portraits of the Day

MADEMOISELLE GEORGES

MADEMOISELLE GEORGES has been beautiful for a very long time, and one might say of her what the peasant said of Aristides, "I banish you because I am tired of hearing you called just." I shall not do like that worthy Greek individual, although evidently it is more difficult to be always beautiful than to be always just; but Mademoiselle Georges seems to have solved that important problem. Years pass over her marble face without in the least modifying the purity of her profile, that of a Greek Melpomene. Her state of preservation is far more miraculous than that of Mademoiselle Mars, who is not in the slightest degree well preserved, and who can cause any illusion in her lovers' parts only to army contractors of the time of the Republic and to generals of the Empire.

But in spite of the excessive number of lustres which she counts, Mademoiselle Georges is really beautiful, and very beautiful. She is so like a Syra-

cusan medal or an Isis on an Eginetic bas-relief that one might well mistake her for them. The rich eyebrows, drawn with incomparable purity and delicacy, stretch over the black eyes full of fire and tragic flashes; the nose, thin and straight, cut by a finely dilated nostril, runs into the brow by a line magnificent in its simplicity; the mouth is strong, arched at the corners, splendidly disdainful like that of an avenging Nemesis which awaits the moment of letting slip her brazen-clawed lion. Yet her mouth has the loveliest smile, which blooms with imperial grace, and one would never dream, when she expresses tender passions, that she has just hurled an antique imprecation or a modern anathema.

Her chin, which exhibits strength and resolution, is firmly turned, and ends that majestic contour of her profile, which is more that of a goddess than of a woman.

Like all the beautiful women of the Pagan cycle, Mademoiselle Georges has a full, broad brow, swelling somewhat at the temples, but not very lofty, very similar to that of the Venus of Milo; a brow full of will, voluptuousness, and power, which suits equally Clytemnestra and Messalina.

A remarkable peculiarity of Mademoiselle Georges'

neck is that instead of rounding inward from the side of the shoulders, it forms a full contour which unites the shoulders and the back of the head without any sinuosity, a mark of the athletic temperament which is shown in the highest degree in the Farnese Hercules. The upper part of the arm is almost formidable through the strength of the muscles and the vigour of the contour. One of her bracelets would make a girdle for a woman of ordinary size, but her arms are very white, beautifully shaped, and end in a wrist childlike in its delicacy and in its slenderness, and pretty hands dimpled all over, regular royal hands made to bear the sceptre and to clutch the handle of a dagger of Æschylus or Euripides.

Mademoiselle Georges seems to belong to a mighty vanished race. She amazes as much as she charms; she seems a Titan woman, a Cybele, mother of gods and of men, with her crown of crenelated towers. Her build has something cyclopæan and pelasgic; one feels on seeing her that she remains standing like a granite column, a witness to a bygone generation, and that she is the last representative of the epic and superhuman type. She is an admirable statue, fit to be placed upon the tomb of tragedy buried forever.

MADEMOISELLE SUZANNE BROHAN

UNTIL now I have reviewed only a certain number of figures of more or less beautiful actresses, more or less suave and harmonious in their contours; I have been preoccupied with the line rather than with the expression; I have endeavoured to draw in ink, so to speak, each of the beautiful flowers of our day. In this gallery of lovely actresses all have a proud look and a bold brow; they walk like Venus or Aspasia; they have the same assured feeling of triumph in their port, the same grace, the same smile. They recall the "Procession of the Hours," in which all the figures are beautiful, and in which each goddess wafts her own perfume through the air.

I have enjoyed describing all these figures; in some the pure severity of a Greek profile, in others the lively and charming ways of a Watteau shepherdess. Now I shall open the gallery of clever actresses.

They cannot complain of my having given precedence to those flowers of a day, of which the wind breaks the stalk; it is to be feared that they will know neither old age nor duration.

I do not mean, however, that all clever actresses are not beautiful; only, there are some among them in whom talent makes one forget even the beauty of the person, just as the main motive of a symphony casts in the shade all its other merits. I know no more absolute tyrant than talent. See for yourself. Here, even in society, there are charming women who might justly be thought pretty, even by the side of the prettiest; they have a bright smile, white teeth, abundance of hair, a lovely complexion, but they have also, unfortunately, wit, and the pitiless generosity of heaven has poured out so many gifts upon them that ugly women, in order to console themselves for that fact, seem to forget every moment that these society rivals are pretty; they merely say, "How clever they are!" and when they say that, it is to avenge themselves.

Cleverness is a book which very few people are capable of writing or of understanding. There is more wit in a single gesture of a woman, in a single

shade of her dress, in a single inflection of her voice, than in all "Candide." Add to this that wit is vanishing and becomes rarer every day on the stage as in society.

Who will restore to us those divine models of wit of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from Madame de Sévigné to Madame de Montesson? What patient analyst will take pains to explain to us how, little by little, wit, that gem so rarely met with among our actresses, passed through an admirable exchange of grace and urbanity from the drawing-room of the court lady to the stage?

Of the different kinds of wit which an actress may possess, the rarest is unquestionably society wit, yet it is that very form which, in spite of prejudice, reconciled the French society which has just come to an end to the simplicity of Gaussin, the repartees of Sophie Arnould, and the daring of Mademoiselle Mars. These ladies had won the right to say anything they pleased by dint of cleverness; they had enough and to spare for all those small memoirs of the eighteenth century, so conceited and impudent. The Cydalises of that day did not rely upon a stock of witticisms borrowed here and there, from the stage

or the *foyer*; they had their own genuine wit. The actresses of that day were in accord with the upper ten; the two powers mutually aided each other.

To-day where is the actress clever enough to venture, off the stage, upon that dangerous ground of wit, to maintain herself on it, and to triumph over others? What woman is always so much mistress of herself as to keep close watch on herself and never to exaggerate? Besides, when a woman is young and beautiful, she is not likely to have recourse to wit when she can so easily appeal to her charms. There are certain sacrifices which are quite inexplicable. Just as young, lovely women of the Court of the Great King, their hair still adorned with pearls, still scented with the roses of Versailles and the perfumed love-knots of scores of lovers, betook themselves fearfully to the solitude of the cloister, so there are also actresses whose wavering courage leads them to take refuge in wit as a means of defence; it then becomes a weapon with which they guard themselves from slander and the mean jealousies of the green-room; it becomes the fan with which they slap the face of fools. Mademoiselle de l'Étoile in the "Roman comique" uses her busk in that way when she wants to punish Ragotin.

It is not my part to seek to explain the motives which cause a pretty actress to take to wit for the rest of her days, as formerly women took to religion; such a resolve can only be the result of great personal merit, and besides, to aspire to reign supreme as a wit is a very fine ambition. This position, unoccupied at the Comédie Française since Mademoiselle Contat, is sought for at present by not more than three or four serious claimants. At their head must be placed Mademoiselle Brohan.

All that I have said about wit applies thoroughly to the nature of that actress, the charming Mademoiselle Brohan, who is to be seen walking so seriously along the street and towards the green-room of her theatre, and who will be seen presently on the stage sparkling with wit, humour, and charm. Every word of hers will tell, every repartee will be piquant, she breathes the very spirit of Marivaux's comedy, she flashes and sparkles as it does. On the stage Mademoiselle Brohan has the effect of champagne; one has not time to see the defects in the work, so completely is one dazzled and carried away. The mobility of her features adds wonderful power to her irony or her passion; as swift as the

bee, she stings before we have thought of warding off the stroke.

But go to the green-room after such an amusing evening, and you find there the most amiable woman of the world, who receives you with the air of a high-bred lady, with the reserve, the wit, the delicacy, and the dignity of manners which no actress, not even Mademoiselle Mars, possesses off the stage. Graceful and fine as one of Petitot's enamels, Mademoiselle Brohan's face could very well do without wit, but she has been quite right to turn to it, even as a matter of policy, for wit best adorns beauty.

MADAME DORVAL

BORN IN 1801 — DIED IN 1849

PEOPLE who never enter theatres are thoroughly convinced that authors and actors of the drama properly so called have almost invariably a long face, a sombre look, and a Catalan dagger concealed about their person. These worthy people would be shocked if they saw traces of gaiety on the face of Alexandre Dumas, of Bocage, of Victor Hugo, or of Frédérick Lemaître; they are quite sure that Dumas killed a number of sailors on his trip to Sicily, that Bocage goes every morning to weep in the Vaugirard Cemetery, that Victor Hugo inhabits a cavern not far from Paris, and that Frédérick Lemaître has tried time and again to commit suicide under the windows of a Russian princess.

The witty and joyous dash characteristic of Dumas' conversation, the quiet and paternal gait of Victor Hugo, Bocage and Frédérick Lemaître in their blue coats playing billiards near the Ambigu, would fill them

with amazement. Now you can easily imagine what that sort of people think of actresses who perform in dramas.

At the head of these is naturally Madame Dorval. She appears to them in the light of a veritable victim; to them her soft, veiled look is full of soulfulness and elegiac sadness. "I am sure," said a mirror-maker to his neighbour, "that that woman weeps eight hours a day. I am told that she has her room hung with black velvet. She goes to church," etc., etc.

It is thus that the ingenious mirror-maker judges that great actress, because he has seen her in the part of Adèle in "Antony," in "The Gamester's Wife," in "Charlotte Corday," and especially in Marguerite in Goethe's "Faust"; parts which Madame Dorval has marked with all her genius for suffering and resigned love. Happily the *bourgeois* and the mirror-maker — I hope so, at least, for the sake of newspaper men — write neither biographies nor notices.

Madame Dorval is one of those privileged natures which necessarily are not understood of the vulgar; she scarce shows her true self save to her circle of intimate friends and to the authors who usually write for her. Adèle in "Antony," whose smile is so sad

and tearful, displays in her own home all the treasures of her naturally bright and joyous disposition. The real characteristic of Madame Dorval's temperament is genuine, open gaiety, as bright and fresh as the song of the bird in the cornfield. She is obliging and sets you at once at your ease, whoever you may be, which is the peculiarity of those genuinely rich in talent, noble hearts which hold out their hand to the poorest. Madame Dorval's conversation is never fed with the wearisome commonplaces which Voisenon calls "good friends which never fail you at need"; on the contrary she willingly indulges, in the maddest possible way, in absurdities and paradoxes, enlivening everything, quizzing everything, imprudently expending herself in a thousand ways, and not understanding the art of saving.

Never seeking an effect, never pretending to utter witticisms, Madame Dorval does so nevertheless with certainty; all her rashest witticisms are fortunate. The peculiar mark of her wit is candour, it is like the bouquet of the rarest wines. The most remarkable thing about Madame Dorval is that she could assuredly turn that wit to some other account. I have no hesitation in saying that if she cared to write a

book, even though she did not put her name to it, the book would be read.

I have an album in which Madame Dorval has copied a few thoughts and maxims drawn from writers of various countries. It is a perfect Babel. The names of Schiller, Victor Hugo, Jesus Christ, Mahomet, Sainte-Beuve, and many others are met with there. These varied extracts are the result of her reading, but the choice of them marks indescribable fancifulness and humour. The reading of the book, written from beginning to end by herself, makes you feel as if you were following out one of Jordaens' wonderful Bacchanals; thoughts alternate with stories, poetry with prose; you come upon sums in arithmetic and astronomical predictions, all whirling in a fantastic spiral, breaking out into so many flashes, which seem to light up the road travelled by Madame Dorval.

I have often been asked by people in the provinces less stupid than the mirror-maker I have spoken of, "Is Madame Dorval witty?" My reply to these people, whom I could not decently present to the charming actress, was, "Have you seen her in 'Jeanne Vaubernier' by Balissan de Rougemont?" For that part is one of the best proofs of Madame Dorval's

wit; she plays it like an actress who puts irony and telling effects into every fold of her fan. M. Balissan de Rougemont must not get conceited because I say this, for it is entirely in spite of him that Madame Dorval has displayed such cleverness in that commonplace story. Actresses sometimes play pleasant tricks to poor authors, — a trick like this one is a noble vengeance.

In order that this article may not fail to reassure people who insist on believing that Madame Dorval inhabits a sepulchre, I am glad to tell them that her drawing-room looks like an annex to that of Marion Delorme. It is furnished with all the comfort and elegance of the day: albums, paintings, statues, a piano, flowers, embroidery, and porcelains. I have not seen in it a single black veil nor any Borgia poison, no Toledo blade and no stiletto. People drink tea, sit on comfortable sofas, talk with clever people and allow themselves to laugh at certain actresses — and you rarely meet any actors there.

MADEMOISELLE RACHEL

BORN IN 1820 — DIED IN 1858

I HAVE no intention of writing a biography of Mademoiselle Rachel. The vulgar curiosity which hungers after insignificant details disgusts me more than I can express. But I may, I believe, without lacking in propriety, indicate a few features of the general appearance of the illustrious tragedian whose name may almost be replaced by this periphrasis.

Mademoiselle Rachel, though devoid of plastic knowledge or taste, possessed an instinctive and deep feeling for statuary. Her poses, her attitudes, her gestures were naturally statuesque and formed a series of *bassi-relievi;* the draperies fell on her tall, elegant, supple body in folds that might have been made by the hand of Phidias; no modern movement broke the harmony and the rhythm of her walk; she was born an antique, and her pale flesh seemed made of Greek marble. Her beauty, unrecognised, — she was an admirably beautiful woman, — had nothing coquettish,

or pretty, nothing French, in a word. Indeed, for a long time she was considered ugly, while artists were lovingly studying and reproducing as a type of perfection her face with its black eyes, which was the very image of the face of Melpomene. Her brow was meant for the golden circlet or white band, her glance was deep and fatal, her face was an exquisite, long oval, her lips were disdainfully drawn up at the ends, her neck was superbly joined to her shoulders. When she appeared, in spite of the arm-chairs, and the Corinthian colonnades supporting a vault with rose ornaments, while the age was that of heroic Greece, in spite of too frequent anachronisms in the language, she at once carried you back to the purest antiquity. It was the Phædra of Euripides, not that of Racine, which you beheld. She turned herself swiftly, with a few easy, bold, simple touches comparable to those of the painters of Greek vases, into a long, draped figure with few ornaments, graceful in its austerity and archaic in its charm, which it was impossible thereafter to forget. I would in no wise take aught from her glory, but in this lay the originality of her talent. Mademoiselle Rachel was rather a tragic mime than a tragedian in the ordinary sense of the word. Her success, which

was so great with us, would have been greater still on the theatre of Bacchus at Athens if the Greeks had allowed women to wear the cothurn. Not that she gesticulated, for on the contrary motionlessness was one of her most telling means of impressing her audiences, but she realised in her appearance all the ideal queens, heroines, and victims of antiquity which the spectator could imagine. By a simple fold of her cloak she often told more than the author in a long tirade, and with a single gesture she called back to the fabulous and mythological times Tragedy, which was forgetting itself in Versailles.

She alone maintained alive for eighteen years a dead form, not by renewing it, as might be supposed, but by making it antique instead of old-fashioned, which perchance it had become. Her grave, deep, vibrating voice, so seldom rising loud or breaking into cries, well suited her self-contained, sovereignly calm acting. Never did any one have less recourse to the epileptic contorsions, to the convulsive or hoarse cries of the melodrama, or of the drama, if you prefer that. Indeed, she was occasionally accused of lacking feeling, a most idiotic reproach. Mademoiselle Rachel was cold like antiquity, which considered the exaggerated mani-

festations of grief indecent, and scarcely allowed Laocoon to writhe as the serpent wound around him, and Niobe to crouch under the arrows of Apollo and Diana. The heroic world was calm, robust, and manly; it would have feared to tarnish its beauty by grimaces; and besides, our nervous suffering, our puerile despair, our sentimental excitement would have made no impression upon those marble natures, on those sculptural personalities which Fate alone could break after a long struggle. The tragic heroes were almost the equals of the gods from whom they were often descended, and they rebelled against Fate rather than whimpered. So Mademoiselle Rachel was right not to use the tearful voice, and not to speak the alexandrine verse tremulously and haltingly as modern sensitive players do. Hatred, wrath, vengeance, revolt against Fate, passion terrible and fierce, love with its implacable fury, murderous irony, haughty despair, fatal madness, these are the sentiments which tragedy can and must express; but it must express them like marble *bassi-relievi* on the walls of a palace or a temple, without breaking the lines of the sculpture, and constantly preserving the eternal serenity of art.

No actress has rendered so well as Mademoiselle

Rachel the synthetic expression of human passion incarnated in tragedy under the figure of gods, heroes, kings, princes, and princesses, as if it were intended to remove them farther from vulgar reality and mean, prosaic details. She was simple, beautiful, grand, and virile like Greek art, which she represented in French tragedy.

Dramatic authors, on seeing the immense success of her performances, often longed to secure her as the interpreter of their works. If she occasionally yielded to such requests, it was, I may affirm it, only regretfully and after much hesitation. Although she was reproached with doing nothing for the art of our day, her tact, so deep and so sure, made her feel that she was not a modern, and that if she played the parts offered to her on all sides she would destroy the pure and antique lines of her talent. She preserved her life long her statuesque attitude and her marble whiteness. The few plays outside of her old repertoire in which she performed are not to be taken into account, for she abandoned them as speedily as she could. So she had no influence upon our contemporary art, but on the other hand, she was not influenced by it. She stands apart, isolated on her pedestal in the midst of

the thymele; around it the choruses and semi-choruses of tragedy ever weave in and out according to the ancient rhythm. There she may be left, as the most suitable funeral figure upon the tomb of Tragedy.

We have said that Mademoiselle Rachel had no influence whatever on contemporary literature, but that is too strong a statement. She certainly did not take any part in it, but by resuscitating our old-time tragedy, she checked the great Romanticist movement which might perhaps have given to France a new dramatic form; she drove to inferior stages more than one discouraged talent; but on the other hand by her beauty and her genius she made the ideal of antiquity live again, and made us dream of an art greater than that of which she was the interpreter.

In private life Mademoiselle Rachel did not, like so many actresses, destroy the illusion she had produced on the stage; on the contrary, she preserved all her prestige. No one was more simply a great lady. The statue had no difficulty in turning into a duchess, and she wore the long cashmere just as she wore the purple mantle with its golden palms. Her small hands, scarce large enough to hold the dagger of tragedy, handled a fan like a queen. When one

saw her close, the delicate details of her charming face were seen in her cameo-like profile within the corolla of the bonnet, as they lighted up with a witty smile. She never posed, she was never tense, she often exhibited a playfulness unexpected on the part of a tragic queen. Many a clever remark, many an ingenious repartee, many a witty saying has fallen from those beautiful lips shaped like Cupid's bow and now mute forever.

An actor's fate, after all, is very sad; he cannot say, like the poet, *non omnis moriar;* his past work does not remain, and all his glory goes down into the grave with him. His name alone is repeated for a time by men. Among the present generation, who is there that has a very clear idea of Talma, Malibran, Mademoiselle Mars, Madame Dorval? What young man is there who does not smile at the amazing tales told by some old amateur still passionately fond of his remembrances; and who does not prefer *in petto* some blooming, living mediocrity performing in an ephemeral work of the day under the glare of the footlights?

So let us not, we patient sculptors of that hard marble called verse, envy, in our wretchedness and

solitude, the noise, the applause, the praise, the crowns, the showers of gold and flowers, the carriages with the horses taken out, the torchlight serenades, or even after death the immense processions which seem to have gathered together the inhabitants of a state. Poor beautiful actresses! poor great queens! Forgetfulness covers them completely, and the curtain of their last performance, as it falls, conceals them forever. Oh, vanished perfumes! Oh, songs long stilled! Oh, passing images! Glory knows that they will not live, and gives them forthwith the favours which it makes immortal poets wait for so long.

THÉOPHILE
GAUTIER

BORN - 1811
DIED - 1872